COMIC MEDIA

THE SPIRIT

BY WILL EISNER

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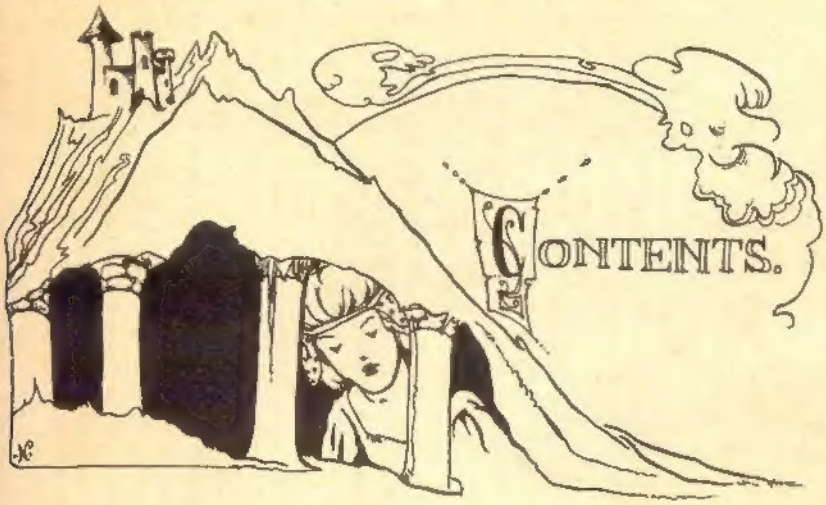

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editorial

It's been rather too many months since the last issue of COMIC MEDIA. Basically, there are two reasons for this; the first is a question of time - since the last issue appeared I haven't spent much longer than three weeks (in all) at no.10, spending most of the time gallavanting around Warwick Univ., and the rest around NYC; and the second is that our ninth issue is the only issue that I've felt vaguely pleased with, and I wanted time to hear reaction from other people on it (some zines have only just reviewed it).

People have been writing into us ordering Comic Media nos. 3,4,5 which don't exist (as far as I know), so I felt that it was about time that I cleared up this problem for our newer readers. CM no.1 appeared back in January '71, followed by the second issue just over a year later - pretty innocuous issues - best forgotten. In the meantime we began work on another magazine called COMIC CATALOG with Alan Austin and Tom Downes which ran for six issues. Alan dropped out as of no.4 with Richard taking over his editorial capacity from the fifth issue. By the seventh issue we'd decided that the name was unsuitable as we'd dropped the ad section, and changed it back to COMIC MEDIA; up to then the mag had been duplicated, but as of no.8 we went offset - and here we are.

We'd like to introduce you to a new member of our staff, Keith Mackenzie, who is the strip editor for the Associated Newspapers Group Ltd. (publishers of the Daily Mail and the London Evening News); Keith provided us with all the SEEKERS material, and tells us that this story has never before seen print in England, and was done expressly for syndication. The Daily Sketch, which carried the strip folded before it appeared in 1971.

Also new to CM is Will Eisner's strip - THE SPIRIT. Our first story is "Sounds" (which would have appeared in the third Harvey issue had it ever seen print). Will told me that the first page of this story was created and lettered by Jules Feiffer (who lettered and pencilled some of the later Spirit stories).

We still have a few of the classic King Features strips left over from last issue's article which we felt it would be a shame to waste. If you like any of them enough then do write in and tell us, and we'll try and carry them in CM. In fact, that also applies for any strip.

The 5th COMIC MART is going to be held on Saturday, September 8th at Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Rd., Kentish Town, London. However, as of the sixth one, which is being held on November 17th, we have obtained the Holborn Assembly Hall, which gives us almost twice as much room as before. And a FREE film show. Details are further on in the issue.

The COMIC MEDIA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER has just gone wraparound offset, and a lovely job it is too. It's available from Richard Burton, 22 Woodhaw, Egham, Surrey TW20 9AP at 12p an issue, or 60p for a five issue subscription, and features news and reviews of comics, paperback fantasy, s.f., the cinema, TV etc.....

We don't have a letters column this issue because we didn't receive a letter worth publishing. We received a lot of

cont. on page 4

OPINION

cont. from page 3

letters alright, but they were either too short (Great! Beautiful!) or too similar (I loved CM9 because it was lovely/fabulous/fantastic/wonderful/.....). O.K., we love praise letters as much as the next person, but we know CM9 wasn't that good ('cos here's CM10). So, more critical letters in the future, please (even if we have to do more typos to get them).

And finally, the great and "glorious" no.11....even more pages we hope, than this one (like 52 perhaps)...the dynamic duo meet Jeff Hawke's creator, Sydney Jordan..."Sex and the Cartoonist" by John Geipel...a new story by Don McGregor, illustrated by Rich Buckler....the beginning of a new Modesty story....our next "Spirit" story....and much, much more (if we can fit it in).

— Nick

ALL THAT GLITTERS by Richard Burton

In recent correspondance Lee Hopewell and myself have been discussing the so-called 'Golden Age of Comics'. To our minds this term is much more applicable to the situation today, which, compared with then, makes that period look very insignificant.

How is it then, that comics from the 30s and 40s have come to command such 'respect' and cause people to lash out a great deal of money on one single, dog-eared and faded copy of an obsolete title? The art (compared to today's standards) would be scratchy, lifeless, almost child-like in appearance. (I'll admit that there are a few exceptions, but these are few and far between.) The writing would be poor, with the same plot being repeated endlessly. Characters would be stereotyped and with no depth at all. The actual reproduction of the art would leave an awful lot to be desired. Printing technology has advanced a great deal since then. Yet still the collectors fall over themselves in shops or at Cons to lay their hands on one of these relics from the past - constantly searching for their personal Eldorado. Relics from an age that should not be taken as a standard to judge today's comics by but should be used as a standard of what comics should not be like today.

How has this situation come about? As Lee says. "I think that too much nostalgia is the reason for the so-termed 'Golden Age of Comics'. Memory is a very funny and fragile thing, and out of these years of wars and fighting people have chosen to remember the things that they were able to escape with during that period. Hence the over emphasised nostalgia for this era."

The 'Golden Age' was merely the birth of the comic book, the first faulty steps in the dark, where quality was sacrificed to quantity. The fifties and early sixties saw the adolescence in which the entity was caught 'stealing the apples' and punished by being given a code of behaviour to live by. Now we

United Features Syndicate

are watching the being mature and prove itself able to stand on its own feet, independant of a guardian's watchful eye. This is the time to watch and treasure, though, again, not to be used as a yardstick in the future.

So open your eyes to the value of today's comic books and cease paying the vastly inflated prices of the 'get-rich-quick merchants' for any scrap of paper that dates from that period of the 20th Century that many people would rather forget. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying "stop buying all comics from the 30s and 40s as they are rubbish", but be selective and skim off the cream while keeping one well open eye on the trends of the present day.

The ending goes to Lee. "By any standards the present quality must be classed as the Golden Age - although who knows what tomorrow may bring? Perhaps the true 'Golden Age' of comic literature may never come in our lifetimes."

I hope that many people will strongly disagree with our views and it is for this reason that the LoC page of CM11 will be open to these comments. WRITE!

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As loyal readers of COMIC MEDIA/CATALOG will know, "OPINION" is a column that is open to anyone anywhere who would like to air an opinion about comics and their allied fields. Although this column has been missing for the last couple of issues we have decided to bring it back and offer it to our many new readers around the world. It is from our foreign friends that we would particularly like to hear as we know that many of them have very strong views about British comics. Please mark all contributions "OPINION" if you wish them to be published. This column can only survive if we have material to stock it - don't let us down. - R.

Dear Mr. Burton,

Thank you for your letter and specimen of your new publication. However, it would not be honest if I did not make criticisms of your opinions. Basically, I believe your association to be nothing more than similar bodies that suffer from the mystery of the collectors' syndrome. What you collect, seems to be of little importance; be it stamps, car numbers or steam trains etc. You, your colleagues and myself are poles apart on the subject of comics.

Therefore, we must firstly discern the use of comics in modern society. I see them as harmless and entertaining journalism, that a child might enjoy. I subscribe like any other perfectionist, to the highest standards I can obtain. I agree that the British Market has reached rock-bottom position, but apart from some of the superbly drawn artwork of America, I do not have any great enthusiasm for fantasy. In my opinion anyone who rates this as literary talent, is devoid of taste.

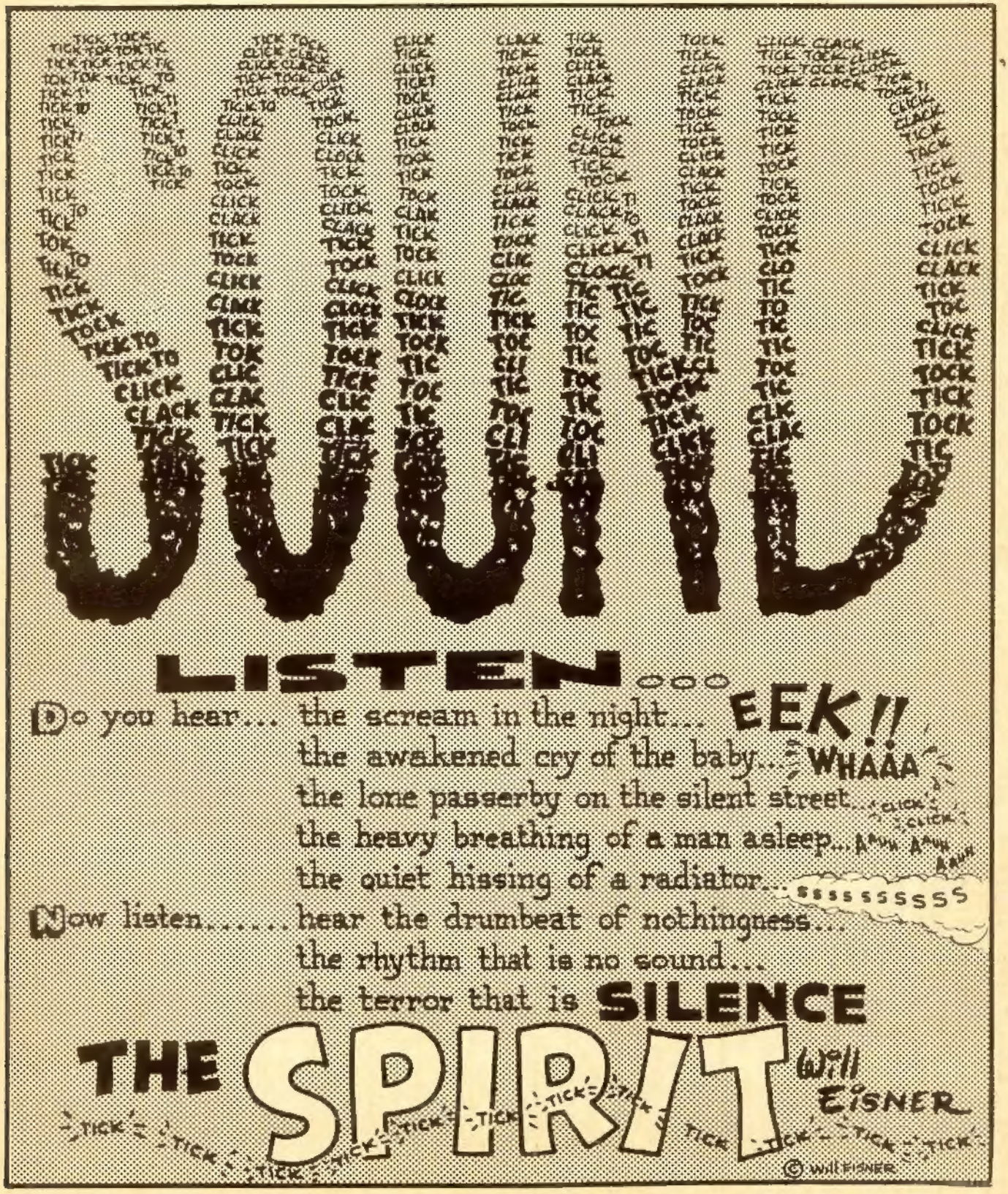
Anybody who has been in this area of publishing as long as myself, will soon put you right on how so many American comics arrive in Britain. It has been common practice to use these comics as ballast on unladen cargo ships for many years; which means of course, that they sell cheaply here.

I thank you for your compliment about TV ACTION, but must add that compared with TV21 which I began with Alan Fennell, and EAGLE, I find the editorial contents second-rate. This is mainly due to the mediocrity pumped out by British and American TV stations, which I am compelled to echo.

As I pointed out before, to me your cult is based on visual expression rather than written. To myself, that which is written will always be of more consequence.

To conclude, I am not a kindred soul, although I do not deny you the right to harmlessly pursue your interests as fervently as you please.

Dennis Hooper,
Editor - TV ACTION.


TICK TOCK
CLICK CLACK
WHAT?
LISTEN...
Do you hear... the scream in the night... EEK!!
the awakened cry of the baby... WHAAA
the lone passerby on the silent street...
the heavy breathing of a man asleep... AAHH AAHH AAHH
the quiet hissing of a radiator... SSSSSSSSS
Now listen..... hear the drumbeat of nothingness...
the rhythm that is no sound...
the terror that is SILENCE
THE SPIRIT
Will Eisner
TICK
TICK
TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK
HMM... IT'S RUNNIN' AWRIGHT, I CAN HEAR IT! BUT IT KEEPS LOSIN' TIME...
HERE'S YOUR ICED TEA MR. BENNDAY.
ART BENNDAY CARTOONS
HMM... WHERE'S THE OTHER LEMON ERNIE? YOU KNOW I LIKE TWO LEMONS!
I ONLY ASKED FOR ONE. I'M SORRY, I FORGOT.
@*%!!*-@ ON YOUR LAST DAY YOU GOTTA MAKE MISTAKES! WHY'D I EVER HIRE YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE?
I GUESS I'LL GO NOW! DO YA MIND IF I DROP AROUND AGAIN SOME TIME AND SHOW YOU MY WORK?
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH... ONLY NOT TOO OFTEN... YOU AMATEURS LOOKIN' FOR FREE ADVICE GIVE ME A PAIN!.. IF YOU ASK ME, KID, MY ADVICE TO YOU IS BECOME A SHIPPING CLERK!.. IN THE TWO WHOLE WEEKS Y'WORKED HERE YOU SHOWED NO TALENT AT ALL! NOW BEAT IT, I GOT WORK TO DO!
YES SIR.
RING RING
HELLO... OH, HELLO... LISSEN WILL OL' PAL, I'M IN A HOLE YEAH... DEADLINES TOMORROW NINE A.M.... WONDER IF Y'COULD HELP ME OUT... MAYBE INK A FEW PANELS... GIVE IT THAT OL' EISNER TOUCH.. HEH HEH.. ...I'LL HELP YOU SOMETIME WHEN YOU'RE LATE ON THE SPIRIT...
GOODBY MR. BENNDAY!
...BUT WILL.. I'M SURE YOUR WIFE WONT OBJECT IF YOU WORK LATE JUST THIS ONCE.. ..OH.. SHE DID... YEAH ...UH HUH... SURE.. YEAH .. I REMEMBER HOW IT WAS WHEN I FIRST GOT MARRIED.. YEAH SURE.. THANKS.
SLAM
THE CHEAPSKATE! HE'DA JUMPED AT IT IF I'DA OFFERED TO PAY! I'LL HAFFTA DO THE WHOLE JOB MYSELF!.. @*%-BLASTED WATCH... NOTHING SEEMS TO BE WORKIN' RIGHT TONIGHT!
2

LE'SSEE, "PANEL 5"... TOM ENTERS GRAVE-YARD WITH WOODEN STAKE IN HAND... SHOW VAMPIRE HIDING BEHIND TOMBSTONE..
SSSSSSSS
GOTTA GET THAT BLASTED FAUCET FIXED!.. FUNNY HOW WHEN Y'R ALONE YOU CAN HEAR EVERY INSIGNIFIGANT SOUND!
SLURP
I'M SWEATIN'... WHY AM I SWEATIN'? IT AIN'T HOT!... MY HANDS ARE GETTIN' THE PAGES STAINED!
CAEEEEEEEK
HEH HEH... SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE MOVIN' AROUND OUTSIDE THE DOOR... CARTOONISTS HAVE TOO MUCH IMAGINATION...
PANEL 6... VAMPIRE LEERS AT TOM... SHOW CLOSE-UP OF VAMPIRE, LONG FANGS AND CLAWS ETC...
BRRR... WHAT EERIE STORIES!.. WHAT MAKES THIS KIND OF STUFF SO POPULAR?
CREAK! CREAK!
S... SOMEBODY IS OUT THERE...?
3

WHO'S THERE? ???
BEEEEP
HONK HONK! HONK BEEEEPCLANG!
DRIP DRIP DRIP
...NOBODY... JUST MY IMAGINATION... PHEW... WHY AM I SWEATING SO?
I WON'T ANSWER THE PHONE... I HAVEN'T GOT THE TIME TO TALK TO PEOPLE WITH THE WORK I'VE GOT T'DO!
RING RING
@%☆!*@..FLYING SAUCERS...GIVES A GUY THE CREEPS ...HOW MUCH LONGER IS THIS GONNA KEEP UP!
RING! RING
TWO YEARS AGO CRIME COMICS WAS THE HOT ITEM, THEN TRUE STORIES, THEN ROMANCE...
RING RING! RING!
...AND NOW IT'S... BLAST THAT PHONE! HELLO!!
HELLO... HELLO! WHO IS THIS? HELLO.. HELLO.. N...NO ANSWER..
THE LINE IS DEAD.! WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

I ONCE SAW A MOVIE WHERE THIS LADY IS ALONE IN THE HOUSE...
SCRATCH SCRATCH
.. THE PHONE RINGS BUT WHEN SHE PICKS IT UP THERE'S NO ONE ON THE OTHER END..
ZZZZ B
.. IT TURNS OUT THAT THE GUY WHO CALLED WAS A HIRED KILLER..
SLAM
... CHECKING UP TO SEE IF SHE WAS HOME BEFORE HE KILLS HER
I FEEL DIZZY.. WISH I COULD STOP SWEATIN'! ... WHO'D WANNA KILL ME, ANYWAY? ... SURE I GOT ENEMIES, BUT...
CREAK
W..WHO...WHO ARE Y...YOU...R-REVEAL YOURSELF I SAY..
CREAK
CREAK
OH!..A GOOD EVENIN' TO YA, SIR!... STAYIN' LATE T'NIGHT, I SEE!
5

HEH HEH NEH!! HOW SILLY OF ME! I COULDN'T HAVE USED THAT RAZOR, ANYHOW.. HEH HEH.. IT'S TOO DULL..
I'M SHAKIN' LIKE A KID! WISH I COULD GET OUT OF HERE...IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT DEADLINE!
...LESSEE, NOW WHERE WAS I?... SHOW THE VAMPIRE STRANGLING TOM, HIS FINGERS WOVEN TIGHTLY AROUND TOM'S THROAT!
FINGERS AROUND HIS THROAT..
FINGERS...???
FINGERS FINGERS AROUND MY THROAT I'M CHOKING!

RING
RING
RING
RING
RING
RING
ARGAA..
RING!
RING
RING
THUD
HELLO...HELLO MR. JORDAN?. THIS IS ERNIE! I TRIED CALLING YOU BEFORE... DON'T DRINK THAT TEA, DO YOU HEAR? I...IT'S SOB POISONED
I.. C. CONFESS. I POISONED IT!.?? HELLO.?.. HELLO?
LATER...
HE'S CONFESSED DOLAN, SIMPLE REVENGE MOTIVE!
HMMM. CYANIDE POISONING! HE'S DEAD ALL RIGHT! SERGEANT COHEN!. YOU AND DUGAN WAIT HERE UNTIL THE WAGON ARRIVES!
YAWN...HO HUM! NOW HERE'S A NICE BUSINESS TO BE IN, A CARTOONIST!
YEAH... A SOFT TOUCH! NOTHIN' TO DO ALL DAY BUT DRAWR PITCHERS AN' GIT PAID FOR IT!

COMIC MEDIA REVIEW

WONDER WOMAN by Charles Moulton and Harry G. Peter with an introduction by Gloria Steinem (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1972; 184pp. - colour; 8¾" x 11¼"; $12.95)

Contrary to popular opinion, the fountainhead of women's liberation was not "The Feminine Mystique", Bella Abzug or the Pill, but rather - WONDER WOMAN. "Like a crash of thunder from the sky comes Wonder Woman, to save the world from the hatreds and wars of men in a man-made world!"

After lying dormant for 26 years, the original Wonder Woman is back with a flash of red, white and blue, ensconced in a compendium of comics and comment. Gathered together in a gold-lame volume are the cream of the Wonder Woman comics, in brighter-than-life colour. Phyllis Chesler, author of the much acclaimed "Women and 'Madness'" has written an interpretive essay on the Amazon legacy, and the personalised introduction is by, who else but Gloria Steinem.

In the midst of Blondie, Little Lulu, Bettie and Veronica and other such feckless females, towers WONDER WOMAN. As described by her creator, she is, "beautiful as Aphrodite, wise as Athena, stronger than Hercules and swifter than Mercury--continually inspiring new faith in human destiny."

Born in 1941, her parents were the imagination and pen of psychologist William Moulton Marston (who wrote under the pen-name of Charles Moulton). Distressed by the war that was gradually entangling the whole world in the '40s, Marston created Wonder Woman, as a sort of knee-jerk reaction to the destruction he saw and despised.

"Women", writes Marston, "represent love; men represent force. Man's use of force without love brings evil and unhappiness. Wonder Woman proves that women are superior to men because they have love in addition to force." So, Wonder Woman returns now to claim her rightful spot next to Betty Friedan, Golda Meir and Shirley Chisolm.

Briefly, Wonder Woman, a combination of Greek mythology and Amazonian legend, lived on Paradise Island, ruled by her mother, Queen Hippolyte. They lived happily on their all-woman isle until, one fateful day, a pilot chasing a Nazi spy crashed thereon. Wonder Woman was chosen to return him to the U.S., and to remain there to fight for "truth, justice and the American way."

To aid her in this fight, she had an invisible plane; a magic lasso that compelled anyone whom it encircled to obey her, bracelets which she could move at lightning speed to deflect bullets, a fount of knowledge of the past, present and future, not to mention of course, her average Amazonian strength which made her stronger than any human being.

However, as Superman was stripped by kryptonite, so too does Wonder Woman have her weaknesses. If ever her bullet-deflecting bracelets should become chained together by a man, then, by Aphrodite's law, she will become immediately powerless, and will not regain her powers until the chain is broken.

There are only two other lapses in the total wonderfulness of this woman. One is her incredible love for the pilot she rescued, a fickle schlemiel named Steve Trevor (who met his end sometime back). He is a sort of Dobie Gillis fellow who means well, but must constantly be rescued by Wonder Woman. The only explanation for this love is, as Wonder Woman puts it herself, "I can never love a dominant man who is stronger than I am," and Trevor fits that bill.

In writing these stories of daring-do, Marston borrows shamelessly from all sources. Steve Trevor is the splitting image of Steve Canyon, another comic strip character, and Wonder Woman's alias is one Diana Prince, a female Clark Kent, her only disguise being her "mild-manner" and her horn-rimmed glasses. Even the stories often ring a familiar bell. How about a WWII tale of a whaler named Captain Rab whose crew deserts him in his quest for an albino killer whale called the white demon. Thar she blows...!

Regardless, Marston keeps the reader constantly on the edge of the chair in pure, gleeful excitement. It is entertaining at its best, a long with a potent dose of feminist ideology. The women calling each other "sister", raise their arms with clenched fists to show solidarity, and are constantly setting out to expose war-mongers and misogynists.

There is not much humour in these comics, even as there is not much humour in the women's movement. But there remains an inexorable quality of scintillation and enlightenment on every page of these comics.

As Steinem says, "Wonder Woman symbolises many of the values of the women's culture that feminists are now trying to introduce into the main stream; strength and self-reliance for women; sisterhood and mutual support among women; peacefulness and esteem for human life; a diminishment both of masculine aggression and of the belief that violence is the only way of solving conflict."

Comics aside, Phyllis Chesler's interpretative essay is a long, long lecture on every conceivable aspect of Amazonian history in fact and fiction. It includes such topics as "Amazons: the universal male nightmare" and the rather pretentious, "Amazons: a psycho-historical perspective." Chesler virtually knocks the reader over in her attempt to convince us that there is substance to the Amazon legend. She succeeds.

It seems that the legends of Amazons, women tribes of great strength an and autonomy, have flourished in almost every civilisation. The stories tell of fierce women who had extraordinary archery and equestrian abilities, and who sometimes followed the custom of shearing off their right breast. In fact, from the accounts Chesler has quoted, such as those of Herodotus and Homer, the men living near these tribes were evidently quaking in their boots in mortal terror of these women. "Hell hath no fury..." as they say.

After reading Steinem's enjoyable introduction and wading through Chesler's essay, it is a totally pleasurable experience to let your mind freely wander in the colourful world of Wonder Woman.

While enjoying these comics, we can also take, perhaps, a short lesson in sensitivity from Wonder Woman: "...remember, this man's world of yours will never be without pain and suffering until it learns love, and respect for hum human rights. Keep your hands extended to all in friendliness, but never holding the gun of persecution and intolerence."

There is, however, a slight catch to the enjoyment of Wonder Woman. The tome sells for a staggering $12.95 plus tax. Merciful Minerva!

Joel Thingvall

TARZAN OF THE APES by Burne Hogarth
(Spring Books, London, 1973; 160pp. - colour; 8¼" x 10¾"; £2.95)

To be honest, this lavishly-illustrated coffee-table comic-book leaves me cold. More, it depresses me as nothing else has depressed me in this line of business for a long time - with the possible exception of Steve Ditko's Mr. A. Comics. But to that I took a savage dislike, whereas here I almost can't summon up enough energy to indulge myself in anything like so positive an emotion.

First of all, let me get one thing straight. Hogarth is a fine artist, and a thinking artist. As an evoker of mood, he has few peers. His landscapes are often truly thrilling, in the real sense of the word. And there is no doubt as to his influence on artists who have come after him.

Yet, when I pick up this hefty tome, I experience a gathering sense of irritation, for I find in it all that is bad about Burne Hogarth, magnified. And my irritation is not diminished when I am told by certain people that this book is the 'watershed of the comics', the one item that proves conclusively that comics have 'come of age', a masterpiece of comic art; that this is, in fact, what comics are all about.

This is not what comics are all about. Apart from anything else the book is woefully written and edited, and, worse, badly drawn.

Where Hogarth's admirers - fanatics in the truest sense - go overboard in their admiration is on his figure-drawing. Hogarth has probably culled more explosive adjectives to describe his work from critics all over the world than any other artist. Indeed, his artwork almost demands it: dramatic, savage, forceful, overpowering, staggering, furious, dynamic and so on.

But the one word common to all critics is 'realistic' - and this it is no not. It is patently not. In many ways, Jack Kirby, even at his most ridiculous, is more realistic than Hogarth. At least Kirby doesn't invent.

Hogarth invents. He cheats like hell! He tosses in muscles on muscles, sinews on sinews, and then doubles the amount. He throws in cords where none should be, muscles where none could be. He makes the human body - ugly most of the time in all conscience - into something that closely resembles the trench systems of the Western Front. To put it bluntly, he's inaccurate.

And it's no use quoting to me the titles of Hogarth's books - "Dynamic Anatomy" and "Dynamic Figure Drawing" - and pointing out that these two are acknowledged by experts and art critics alike as the last words on the subject, the synthesis of a lifetime's study,etc. etc. This cuts no ice. In fact, it simply strengthens my opinion that fans are totally devoid of any sort of critical faculty whatsoever and are principally motivated by blind hero-worship on a mammoth scale.

One has only to glance through the second half of this book to see what I mean. Page after page of impossible poses and positions. Foreshortening that is so exaggerated as to make Tarzan look permanently deformed. Postures that are meant to be dramatic and exciting, but go so far in the opposite direction that one's only reaction is to fall about laughing.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Hogarth is older now; and where before - 25/30 years ago - he could get away with such delineation and could make his drawings seem, if not too realistic, at least dramatic in the 'comic art' sense and thus OK, now it is clear that his former discipline has been weakened over the years to such an extent that we are left with, not to put too fine a point on it, a lot of sloppy drawing.

Where Kulonga the black hurls a spear at Kala, his left leg is without doubt longer than his right. There are many instances of this. Tarzan, too, in different pictures throughout the book, has arms, legs and torsos of varying lengths and widths, so that he becomes a sort of Plastic Man - only this isn't funny.

Possibly the worst frame in the book is where a rope hurled by Tarzan (out of frame) coils around Kulonga's neck and jerks him off his feet. Kulonga's pose is such that, derided as we are at IPC, even we at the juveniles department wouldn't let it through. It'd go straight back to the artist with the message: Redraw - and get it right.

I have one other major gripe about this book. Tarzan has no penis.

Before we go any further I'd better make it clear that I have no fixed opinion on the drawing of the naked human form one way or the other.

If an artist can get away with drawing a naked man without drawing his prick, well and good. If, on the other hand, he can get away with drawing a naked man and drawing his prick - well, that's OK, too. It depends on how much of an artist he really is. But on this showing, Hogarth goes right down to the bottom of the class.

It isn't simply a question of vines, bushes, creepers, branches and other

---

free COMIC MART

Saturday Nov 17th

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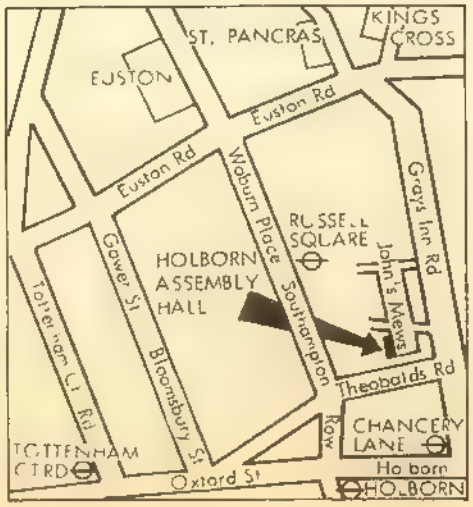
COMIC MART

Comic Mart is Britain's largest fantasy fan gathering for all fans of comics, science fiction, pulps, films, posters, etc., in other words, anything within the realms of fantasy. The 50,000 comics on sale range from the early 30's and 40's (early DC, Atlas, Timely, etc.,) to the very latest on sale in the States (Jan. '74 - including undistributed titles) and comics such as Conan, Swamp Thing, Frankenstein, The Shadow, etc., etc.... from early British comics to recent European imports and undergrounds; in fact, almost any comic you've ever wanted should be within easy grasp. The doors open at mid-day. Be there!



EVENTS

The Comic Mart will start at mid-day, and will be followed by a free film show.

DEALERS

Anybody can come along and get a dealers' table, which are going for £1.50 each. If you want to sell some of your old comics (and make a lot of instant cash), then this is the place to do it at. For all enquiries, table bookings and confirmations, please send an S.A.E. to :

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FUTURE COMIC MARTS

Jan. 19th Holborn Assembly Hall
April 27th Holborn Assembly Hall

bits of foliage being coyly positioned so as to just hide that particular portion of man's anatomy. It's as if Hogarth went out of his way to make the whole thing a ludicrous game.

But that's not it, either. Put at its bluntest, Hogarth chickened out. He had the chance of breaking down a barrier here, a barrier that needs breaking down. He had the chance of drawing an honest commercial 'comic', and he fluffed - so badly, indeed, that the result goes beyond being merely laughable and becomes in fact incredibly embarrassing. Worse, one is not embarrassed oneself, one is embarrassed for the artist.

Consider - out of 61 action frames in the book, that feature Tarzan without his leopard knickers on, 23 are frontal shots and 38 are back shots. Thus one is presented with nearly twice as many frames of Tarzan doing things where you can't actually see what he is doing. This must be the ultimate in under-played heroics.

Personally, I've no desire to see a multitude of cock-shots in any comic-book, unless they are necessary or accurately drawn, or it would be silly to leave them out - or unless, as in most underground comix, they're an integral part of the action, so to speak. I'd much rather gaze on, not to mention get to grips with, the female equivalent any day of the week.

But it's there - for God's sake - hanging from your crotch. You can't get away from it. And if your line is human anatomy, and realism, and doing things accurately, you can't leave the bloody thing out.

Come to think of it, maybe it's just as well Hogarth did leave it out. If he'd drawn it in, God knows how many extra veins, cords, knots and sinews he'd have thrown in for good measure.

Incidentally, I never saw the original American edition, but I hope the printing was better than this. The colour here is very washy, and the register isn't all that hot at times, either.

All in all, as far as I'm concerned, this is a pretty dire book, and does no nothing to further the cause of comic art in any respect.

Chris Lowder

ODD BODKINS by Dan O'Neill (Glide Publications, 330 Ellis St., San Francisco, Ca. 94102, USA, 1969 - 124pp. - some colour; 10" x 13"; $3.95)

Dan O'Neill was asked by the publishers to make his own statement about what is happening and how he feels about it; this book is the result - and it is a joy to read, to gaze at, to consider. The artwork is simple, with the characters drawn almost crudely - " Peanuts" is much more realistic. However, every drawing shows an excellent sense of perspective, with long and winding roads, distant mountains, the sun and the moon in the sky - and frequently commenting - and every effect O'Neill tries for succeeds gloriously.

The book is divided into ten chapters. We join Fred, a man-size bird of no particular species, and Hugh, a man, as they walk towards us along the road, the sun smiling high in the sky, the moon, more anxious, also in evidence. Hugh asks, "Fred...where is God?" - they stop, and when told that God is everywhere, Hugh decides impulsively that he's under a rock. The rock, however, has an owner, one Lulu, or, more exactly, Lucille Marie Gartersnake, who objects to its removal. Before the end of the segment, Hugh has decided that God has swallowed the world, and that they are in his big toe, and is yelling warning to the heavens. "Watch out for the rocks, God!! Watch out for the Stickers and Brambles, too, God...and snap turtles!! They'll snap your big toe off!! Don't stumble on a snap turtle, God..." Fred wanders off in a daze.

Most important things happen when, as O'Neill describes it, "It is that COSMIC time in the Universe when everything gets done...Tuesday after Lunch." The next encounter happens then, their first meeting with 100% American Dog Sam, a reactionary right-winger, and also with a commie turtle. After that, Fred meets the one-and-only bat-winged hamburger snatcher, whose sole diet is hamburger, which he eats to rid the world of them, as he hates them because they give him heartburn, and also because they are part of everyone's concept of America.

Hugh returns next, scaring Fred away with a ludicrously solemn monologue on ticklishness and its opposite. In the sky the sun admits to the moon why he smiles so. "I'm a dying star. When they blow themselves up in their foolishness...the energy of their dying blast will feed me."

It is still Tuesday After Lunch, and Fearless Fred is still running, until he trips over a man in a bottle, protecting himself from the Bomb, and maybe ladies. In the end, Fred smashes the bottle to liberate him, and he dashes off delightedly - until, that is, he steps on the broken glass.

Fred continues along the road. A gingerbread man dashes by, joyously shouting that his pursuers are going to get such a case of indigestion. Shortly after this, Hugh catches up with Fred, and they continue on together, to meet a most violently noisy man and frog-stomper, who is carefully sublimating his latent aggressions, or so he explains. The frog, by the way, is called Howard, and is in a dilemma. In the pond he is safe from stomping; however, when there he cannot read a comic without it getting severely soggy. Anyway, eventually, the man discovers a road called Despair, and walks off towards Hope - whereupon O'Neill puts in a half-page picture of a crucifiction on a telegraph pole.

At the ocean's edge, Hugh and Fred discuss certain moral and political issues, debate whether or not the world is round, and Fred converses with the ocean whereupon Hugh wanders off, to be crashed into by the bat-winged hamburger snatcher, whom he mistakes for the great Hoo-Hoo, or deity. Keeping his eyes tight-shut, he memorises the hamburger-chasers mundane comments as "Revealed Truth", including a mention of the Magic Cookie. Hugh dashes back to Fred, pleading for a Magic Cookie; Fred gives him one, just as 100% American Dog returns to accuse Fred of un-American activities. As Hugh goes under the psychedelic cookie's power, we switch to full colour, and Hugh is transported into a dream-world castle, as the dog Sam howls after him. Fred slips a magic cookie into the dog's mouth, and he turns into Hitler, quickly joined in cookie-land by that old friend of Dan O'Neill and the Air Pirates, Mickey Mouse, who is able to gun down Fred before he too enters magic cookie-land.

They walk off out of the magic coun-

GOD! IT'S GOD!!
I'VE FOUND GOD!!
BLINK
HEY, FRED!! I FOUND GOD UNDER THIS ROCK!
HE FOUND GOD UNDER THERE WITH LULU..
I TOLD YOU SHE HAD COMPANY.
WHERE'S MY ROCK?

try - after all, 100% American Dog Hitler and his fascist friend are there now - back into the more real world. "Well," asks Fred, "did you learn anything?" 'Yeah, I learned one thing," Hugh replies on the final page. "Life can be a picnic, ONLY if you accept the ants..."

A difficult book to describe, certainly,but with a lot of things going for it. On one level, it is constantly amusing, with genuinely funny animals and people in genuinely funny positions. It is, however, as Dan O'Neill intended, also a never obtrusive commentary on the whole wide real world, with the man in the glass bottle saving himself and reading Playboy, the dog Sam, the sublimating violent man, and the hamburger snatcher. There is a lot in this very handsome book, an excellent performance by a very talented gentleman; I recommend it most highly.

Martin Lock

THE STERANKO H-I STORY OF THE COMICS Vol.2 by James Steranko (Supergraphics, 218 N. 6th St.,Reading, Pa.19601, USA, 1972 - 128pp.; 10½" x 14"; $5.00)

Quite frankly, there seems little point in doing a review of this book. If you don't want it, you must have only the shallowest interest in comics, and I don't know why you are reading this magazine. If you do want it, you don't need me telling you what it's all about, or how good it is.

However, since it means the difference between getting a free copy of Comic Media and not getting one, I'll tell you anyhow.

First off, Steranko 2 is better than Steranko 1. Far better. Indeed, a vast improvement. And I don't just mean because it's got 44 extra pages (and, therefore, lashings more pix), including a complete seven-page "Spirit" story.

Steranko 1 suffered, to a certain extent, from its content. Necessary content, of course - you had to have the beginnings of comics, you had to have Superman and Batman - but a lot of it, said critics, was old hat, which was true. What those same critics failed to recognise was that the old hat (especially the Superman and Batman sections) was so extended and amplified and reworked as to become as stereophonic sound is to mono - something strikingly fresh and original.

My main criticism at the time was the Pulps section. True, you can't do much of a History of Comics without a section on their legitimate predecessors. But, following on from that,you can't do much of a section on the Pulps in a History of Comics.

Thus, the Pulps section ended up as an indigestible wodge of type, which seemed, at times, hurriedly and badly written (as though the writer wanted to get it out of the way - which, of course, was true) and which, oddly, contained more than a few inaccuracies. I say oddly, because Steranko is supposed to be something of an authority on the subject.

Steranko 2, however, is fine fare. Lavishly packaged and produced, it's all comics - and bloody good comics, at that.

Half of its 128 pages are taken up with the story of the Quality line, while most of the rest of the book is devoted to Fawcett comics. A bridge chapter records the exploits of the "Flying Heroes" of the various lines, such as Hillman's "Airboy" and the characters who filled Fiction House's Wings Comics.

Naturally, in the Fawcett section, Steranko has relied to a great extent on the memories of that unparalleled wordsmith, Otto Binder. Unparalleled? The statistics alone are fairly staggering.

Binder scripted 451 Captain Marvel stories out of a possible 618, 69 Mary Marvel stories out of 98, 162 Marvel Family stories and 161 Capt. Marvel, Jnr., stories. In the end, Binder wrote something like 57% of the entire Marvel saga ... and if you think just over half isn't all that much, really - you must remember that the nearest any other single writer came in the percentage stakes was probably about ten or twelve.

Of course, this doesn't include work done for other Fawcett heroes - or, indeed, for other companies. Steranko reckons that Binder must have filled during his comichook writing career from 1939 onwards something approaching 50,000 PAGES OF COMICS - and I'm not about to argue with that.

Statistics. The Fawcett chapters are full of them, and fascinating stuff it is, too. Like the description of the piece-work system in the Jack Binder (Otto's elder brother) studio - Roughs: $1.00 per page; ink b/gs: $1.25 per page, pencil b/gs. 75 cents per page for newcomers, heading on a 'Splash': 60 cents etc.. Or the cash break-down for a ten-page Capt. Midnight story: Clem Weisbecker, roughs except for 'Splash' - $9.00; John Spranger, layout of 'Splash', plus pencils and inking for main and secondary figures, and b/gs - $28.50; Len Frank, inks for 'Splash', and all figures on seven other pages $17.25; and so on. Total

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And if this sounds like a hard-headed, mercenary approach to the comics - it was! But then these men were pros, and being pros they also enjoyed the work. It showed.

But for my money, the four chapters on the Quality Comics line make the best, most compulsive reading., especially the excellent chapter on Plastic Man, and his creator, that unhappy genius of the comics, Jack Cole.

Cole, a lanky six-footer, was generally quiet, shy and a dreamer, and, judging from his sudden bouts of depression and equally sudden fits of exhilaration, a classic schizophrenic. He was also a superb comic artist and a terrific story teller, both in his panel breakdowns and in his way with words.

I'd rate Cole alongside Will Eisner (who also gets a chapter to himself) as one of the rare ones - an all-round creative entertainer. But in some ways he was better than Eisner. Whereas Eisner's humour was cool, Cole's was hot - he was very, very funny.

Cole, in fact was one of the remarkably few writers or artists in comics who could make you laugh. Not just smile or grin or chuckle - but laugh out loud, at the sheer impudence or ingenuity of his wit, and the rumbustuous mayhem of his visual comedy.

It would be nice to know that such a guy as Jack Cole made it. And, of course, in a sense he did. But not quite.

After he left "Plastic Man" completely in 1954, he did a lot of work for Hugh Hefner's Playboy, and, in 1958, landed the deal that he'd been dreaming of all his life - a nationally syndicated daily and sunday strip. Yet in August of that year, after a Playboy party, he went home, purchased a .22 pistol, and drove out some miles onto the highway, where he parked his car, and then shot himself.

Why did he do it? It's hard to say. The classic schizoid's change of mood is startlingly abrupt; from the pinnacle of contentment, he can hurtle into the depths of despair. The higher the happiness, perhaps, the deeper the misery.

It seemed that Cole had always lived on a knife-edge, however easy-going he appeared on the surface - he broke down and wept, for instance, when he was told that other artists and writers would have to help him out on "Plastic Man".

But whatever his private tragedy, it's good that his genius came through in public, to leave a legacy of something like ten years of one of the cleverest, most professional (and certainly the funniest) strips in the picture-story medium.

But don't run away with the idea that Steranko 2 is all gloom and despondency. The happy moments far outweigh the tragic, and Steranko is at his best when dealing with the artists and writers (in this particular phase of his History) who contributed towards making the comic-book an artform in itself - C.C.Beck, Mac Raboy, Reed Crandall (the "Blackhawk" section is particularly well handled), Klaus Nordling, writers Bill Woolfolk and Otto Binder, Wendell Crowley, the incomparable Lou Fine, and so on.

And this is why Steranko's project - "The History of the Comics" - is so important, and so valuable. In the two volumes already published, we are not simply presented with a digest of comic stories, a history of characters, a procession of writers and artists- but an intensive and extensive study that is at once subjective and objective, highly opinionated and yet coldly factual.

Steranko's History of the Comics, when all six volumes have been published, will remain as an invaluable historical and sociological document for a long,long time. Indeed, if its standard in toto, remains as high as volume 2, I doubt whether it will ever be surpassed.

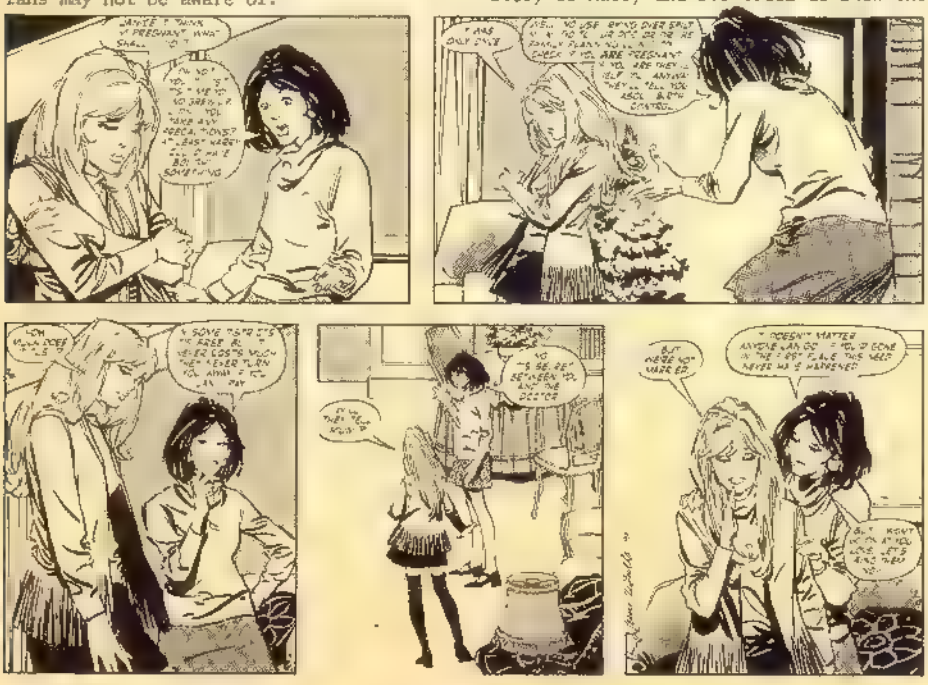
Chris Lowder

TOO GREAT A RISK! Written and designed by Gillian Crampton Smith. 2p each & SAE from FPA, 63 Bevill Allen Close, Amen Corner, London SW17 8PU.

This is one of the most important comic strips to be published in years. It has been devised at the request of social workers as an attempt to meet the needs of teenagers who may not or will not read or learn about contraceptives elsewhere. "Too Great A Risk" has deliberately been designed to resemble a story from 'Jackie' or 'Romeo'*, but as you read it you are immediately aware that the content is very different. The cover has a marvellous inset panel of Eve, the heroine, gazing anxiously at a calendar, superimposed over the traditional romantic shot of the young couple embracing under a tree, and the first panel reveals a worried Eve; "Harry and I had been very much in love for some time but one day something happened which changed our whole lives ..." goes the caption, while she thinks "I'm more than a week overdue".

As if you haven't guessed, this strip does not paint the usual romantic, but unrealistic picture of boy-girl relationships, nor is it a pornographic cock and cunt feast by R. Crumb, but instead the story of Harry and Eve tries to show the implications of having a sexual relationship. It is not until the end of the story that we know for sure whether or not Eve is actually pregnant. In the course of the story, Harry and Eve have many arguments and many sleepless nights of worry as they consider what to do, and accurate information on birth control appears as the story unfolds.

*'Jackie' and'Romeo' : Two English comics for teenage girls, that Superman and Thor fans may not be aware of.



With over 31,000 teenage abortions in 1972, and 19,000 illegitimate births in 1971 to girls in England between 16-19, it is clear that this is an important educational guide. The information is accurate, and fair. There are no scaremongering "You'll go to hell" slogans or emotional moral judgements made in the strip, which goes out of its way to scoff at old wives' tales. Sexual experiences are accepted as a matter of fact, and not cheap titillation. It is a first class example of the comic strip as a medium used to spread a message.

Since it's comics we're interested in, rather than contraceptives, you may well see no point in the review. If this is so, then you're no real lover of the comic strip as an art form. Comics are still a joke to 90% of England, and not really thought of anything but fodder for children. Fritz the Cat and Kama Sutra Rides Again can shock people. Comic strips have been used for informative purposes before, of course, to spread educational campaigns such as "The Green Cross Code" - an instructional campaign for young children learning road sense - and advertisers frequently use cartoons to appeal to children when they wish to promote sweets, ice cream and foodstuffs. What makes "Too Great A Risk"so important is the fact that it's not aimed at young children, but young adults, and the topic - contraception - is a very adult subject, which is easy to confuse, or belittle. The fact that it succeeds as an information leaflet and as a comic strip makes "Too Great A Risk" all the more satisfying. You know it makes sense.

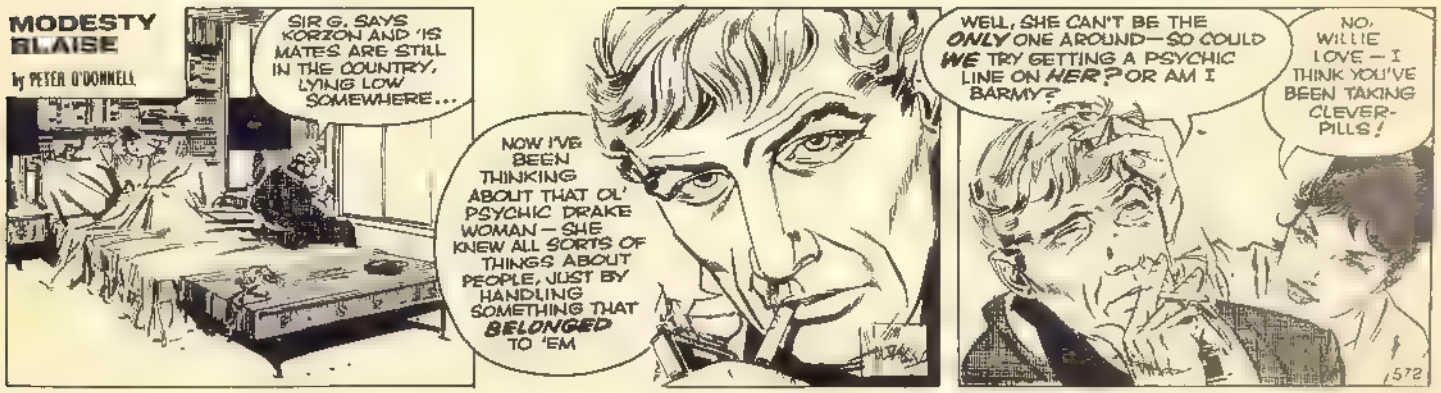
G. Randy Cleaver

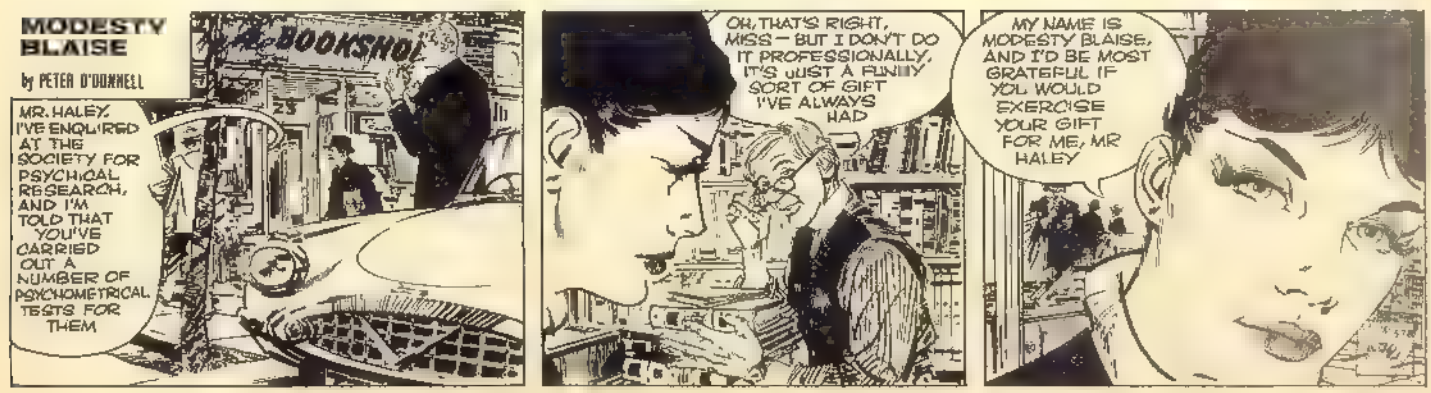
cont. on page .

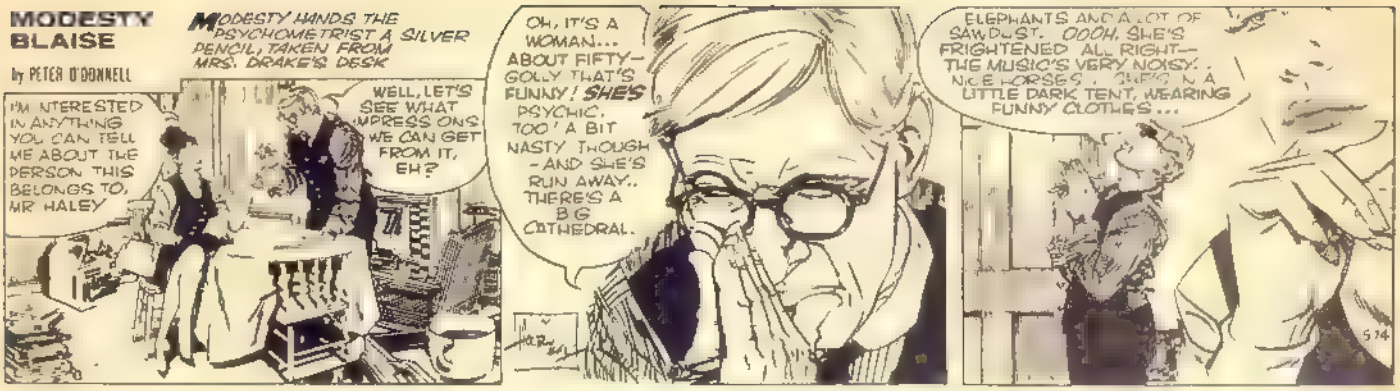
THE
MIND
OF MRS.
DRAKE

PART THREE

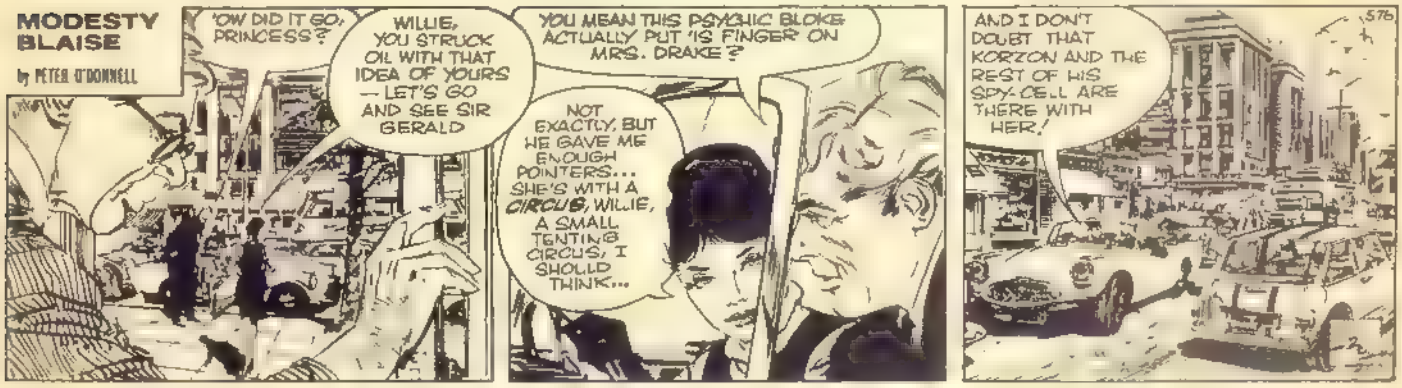
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
IN MODESTY'S PENTHOUSE, AT TWO IN THE MORNING, A WEEK AFTER JEANNIE CHALLON'S DEATH..
PRINCESS...?
WHAT IS IT, WILLIE? COME IN.
AND PASS MY WRAP— I STILL SLEEP RAW
DON'T WONDER... YOU SLEP' IN YOUR CLOTHES 'ALF YOUR LIFE, AN' IT'S NICE TO FEEL FREE
LOOK... I'VE JUST WOKE UP WITH A CRAZY IDEA, PRINCESS
ABOUT FINDING KORZON AND THE REST?
571


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
SIR G. SAYS KORZON AND 'IS MATES ARE STILL IN THE COUNTRY, LYING LOW SOMEWHERE...
NOW I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT OL' PSYCHIC DRAKE WOMAN — SHE KNEW ALL SORTS OF THINGS ABOUT PEOPLE, JUST BY HANDLING SOMETHING THAT BELONGED TO 'EM
WELL, SHE CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE AROUND — SO COULD WE TRY GETTING A PSYCHIC LINE ON HER? OR AM I BARMY?
NO, WILLIE LOVE — I THINK YOU'VE BEEN TAKING CLEVER-PILLS!
572


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
BOOKSHOP
MR. HALEY, I'VE ENQUIRED AT THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, AND I'M TOLD THAT YOU'VE CARRIED OUT A NUMBER OF PSYCHOMETRICAL TESTS FOR THEM
OH, THAT'S RIGHT, MISS — BUT I DON'T DO IT PROFESSIONALLY, IT'S JUST A FUNNY SORT OF GIFT I'VE ALWAYS HAD
MY NAME IS MODESTY BLAISE, AND I'D BE MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD EXERCISE YOUR GIFT FOR ME, MR HALEY


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
MODESTY HANDS THE PSYCHOMETRIST A SILVER PENCIL, TAKEN FROM MRS. DRAKE'S DESK
I'M INTERESTED IN ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT THE PERSON THIS BELONGS TO, MR HALEY
WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT IMPRESSIONS WE CAN GET FROM IT, EH?
OH, IT'S A WOMAN... ABOUT FIFTY— GOLLY THAT'S FUNNY! SHE'S PSYCHIC, TOO! A BIT NASTY THOUGH — AND SHE'S RUN AWAY.. THERE'S A BIG CATHEDRAL.
ELEPHANTS AND A LOT OF SAWDUST. OOOH, SHE'S FRIGHTENED ALL RIGHT— THE MUSIC'S VERY NOISY. NICE HORSES. SHE'S IN A LITTLE DARK TENT, WEARING FUNNY CLOTHES...
574

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WELL I DON'T KNOW IF I'VE BEEN ANY HELP, MISS— THEY WERE A QUEER LOT OF IMPRESSIONS I GOT FROM THE PENCIL...
ELEPHANTS AND HORSES, AND THAT WOMAN IN A SORT OF FANCY DRESS — I COULDN'T MAKE SENSE OF IT MYSELF
IT MAKES SENSE TO ME, MR HALEY PLEASE LET ME PAY YOU FOR YOUR HELP
CLEAR
575
NO MISS— WE FOUND THAT TAKING MONEY SEEMS TO WEAKEN THE OLD PSYCHIC FACULTIES. STRANGE ISN'T IT? BUT I'D BE GLAD OF SOMETHING IN THE OXFAM BOX


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
'OW DID IT GO, PRINCESS?
WILLIE, YOU STRUCK OIL WITH THAT IDEA OF YOURS — LET'S GO AND SEE SIR GERALD
YOU MEAN THIS PSYCHIC BLOKE ACTUALLY PUT 'IS FINGER ON MRS. DRAKE?
NOT EXACTLY, BUT HE GAVE ME ENOUGH POINTERS... SHE'S WITH A CIRCUS, WILLIE, A SMALL TENTING CIRCUS, I SHOULD THINK...
576
AND I DON'T DOUBT THAT KORZON AND THE REST OF HIS SPY-CELL ARE THERE WITH HER!

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
A CONTINENTAL CIRCUS, OVER HERE ON TOUR — IT'S AN IDEAL COVER FOR ROTATING FOREIGN AGENTS, GETTING THEM IN AND OUT OF THE COUNTRY
SWITCH PASSPORTS, CHANGE THE PHOTOS, AND 'ALF A DOZEN MEN GO BACK WHILE A NEW LOT STAY BE'IND
FRASER, I WANT A LIST OF ALL CIRCUSES OPERATING IN THIS COUNTRY — THEY MUST BE LICENSED BY SOME AUTHORITY OR OTHER, SO IT SHOULDN'T TAKE YOU LONG
577

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

LATE EVENING, AT COMMANDER CHALLON'S COTTAGE...

WHO IS IT?

MODESTY BLAISE—WE THINK WE'VE LOCATED KORZON AND HIS MEN, COMMANDER..

AT A TENTING CIRCUS NEAR CANTERBURY AND WILLIE'S OUTSIDE WITH THE CAR, IF YOU WANT TO COME WITH US

JUST GIVE ME TIME TO PUT A JACKET ON—DID TARRANT SEND YOU TO PICK ME UP?

NO—BUT I REMEMBERED YOU SAYING THAT YOU WANTED TO BE THERE

I DO... AND YOU'RE VERY KIND, MY DEAR

578

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

HALF-AN HOUR BEFORE MIDNIGHT, A MILE FROM Chard's Mammoth Circus and Funfair, CARS ASSEMBLE WITH A DOZEN PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN

SO YOU DECIDED TO COME DOWN YOURSELF, SIR GERALD?

AH, MODESTY, THERE YOU ARE - I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D MISSED THE RENDEZ-VOUS

WHY ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE THAT? I MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT -

GOOD EVENING, GERALD... DID YOU FORGET ABOUT ME?

NO, I DIDN'T FORGET, ROGER ... NOW WILL YOU ALL *PLEASE* LEAVE THE POLICE TO HANDLE THIS MATTER!

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

IN ONE OF THE LARGE CIRCUS CARAVANS...

WE BOARD SHIP FOR FRANCE IN FIVE DAYS YOU GET THAT BEARD SHAVED OFF TOMORROW, KORZON

AND YOU, MRS. DRAKE, PUT A BIT MORE GO INTO YOUR *GIPSY ZELDA* SIDE-SHOW— THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A *CIRCUS!*

HOW MANY OF YOUR STAFF AND PERFORMERS ARE *OUR* PEOPLE, CHARD?

VERY FEW— AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE REST NOTICING NEW FACES IN THE CIRCUS... I PAY THE KIND OF MONEY THAT MAKES PEOPLE SHORT SIGHTED

THE PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN MOVE IN QUIETLY

580

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

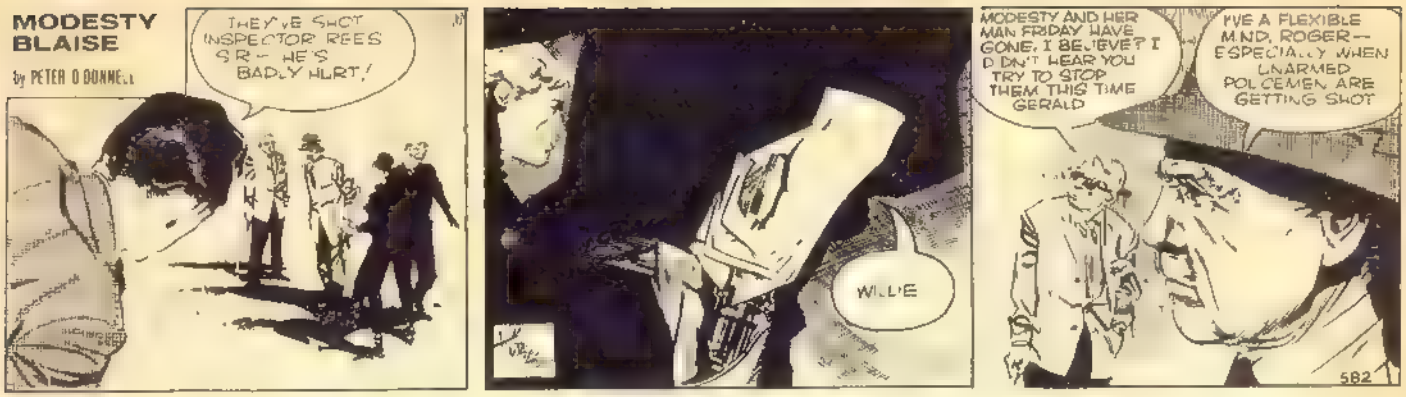
I STILL THINK THE POLICE SHOULD BE ARMED— THESE MEN ARE KILLERS

THIS IS ENGLAND, MY DEAR... THE POLICE WAIT UNTIL SOMEBODY SHOOTS AT THEM BEFORE THEY APPLY FOR FIRE-ARMS TO BE ISSUED

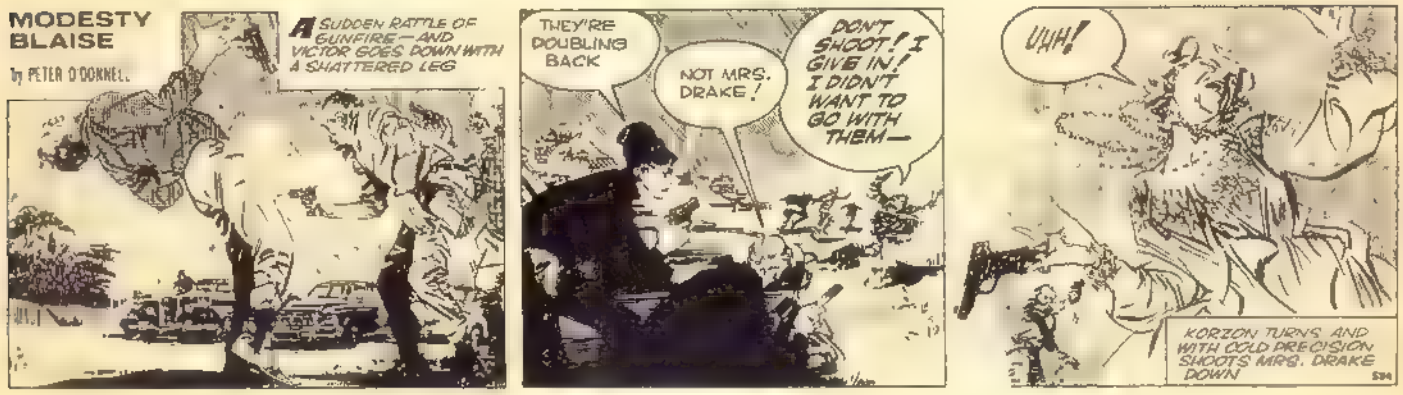
THE DOOR OF CHARD'S CARAVAN OPENS

MR CHARD? I'M A POLICE OFFICER AND I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT—

58


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
THEY'VE SHOT INSPECTOR REES SIR — HE'S BADLY HURT!
WILLIE
MODESTY AND HER MAN FRIDAY HAVE GONE. I BELIEVE? I DIDN'T HEAR YOU TRY TO STOP THEM THIS TIME GERALD
I'VE A FLEXIBLE MIND, ROGER — ESPECIALLY WHEN UNARMED POLICEMEN ARE GETTING SHOT
582

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
FIVE OF THEM, SIR, ONE WAS A WOMAN — THEY WENT THAT WAY
HAVE YOUR MEN TRY TO KEEP CONTACT, SERGEANT — BUT THEY MUSTN'T ATTEMPT TO CLOSE!
THEY'LL MAKE FOR THE TRANSPORT LINES, GERALD
SO WILL MODESTY
HOLD IT, KORZON!
THAT'S BLAISE!
583


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
A SUDDEN RATTLE OF GUNFIRE — AND VICTOR GOES DOWN WITH A SHATTERED LEG
THEY'RE DOUBLING BACK
NOT MRS. DRAKE!
DON'T SHOOT! I GIVE IN! I DIDN'T WANT TO GO WITH THEM —
UUH!
KORZON TURNS AND WITH COLD PRECISION SHOOTS MRS. DRAKE DOWN
584

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
ONE WOUNDED SIR GERALD, AND MRS. DRAKE DEAD KORZON SHOT HER WHEN SHE TRIED TO QUIT
SO THERE ARE ONLY THREE LEFT...
NO SIR — THEY'VE BEEN JOINED BY HALF A DOZEN MORE, AND THEY'RE HOLED UP IN THAT BIG "Haunted House" SIDESHOW!
TRANSPORT?
MUST BE
WILL YOU PLEASE TRANSLATE YOUR SHORT-HAND FOR LESSER MINDS!
585

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WHY HAVE KORZON AND HIS MEN GONE TO GROUND IN THIS "Haunted House" PLACE?
OUR GUESS IS A GETAWAY CAR — WILL YOUR MEN COVER THE OUTSIDE, PLEASE?
THEY CAN USE THE TWO CAPTURED GUNS— ALL RIGHT, WILLIE, START SWINGING THAT SLEDGE
586
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
AS WILLIE BREAKS THROUGH THE TIMBER WALL OF "The Haunted House"...
THERE SHE IS, PRINCESS, ALL SET FOR A GETAWAY— MUST BE A DOOR OUT SOMEWHERE
LOOK OUT, WILLIE — THEY'RE HERE
587
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
TWO DEAD SIR GERALD — THE REST TURNED BACK
I'VE WHIPPED THE ROTOR ARM, PRINCESS — JUST IN CASE
SEE IF THERE'S A TORCH IN THE CAR, WILLIE — THEY MIGHT KILL THE LIGHTS IN THIS PLACE ANY MINUTE
IF THEY DO, I COULD WELL BE OF SOME USE
588
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
IN A SMALL ROOM AMID THE MAZE OF CORRIDORS IN "The Haunted House"
WE'LL SPLIT IN TWO GROUPS AND TRY BLASTING OUR WAY OUT— ONE THROUGH THE ENTRANCE, THE OTHER THROUGH THE UNDERFLOOR GARAGE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHY CAN'T WE TAKE THE CAR?
WITH BLAISE THERE WAITING FOR US?
I'M CUTTING THE POWER TO LEVEL THE ODDS — SHE'S DEATH WITH THAT GUN, SO WE'LL ALL FIGHT BLIND!
589
THE LIGHTS GO OUT...

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

IN THE SUDDEN DARKNESS...

THE LIGHTS HAVE GONE, ROGER

AH... THEN IT'S TIME FOR ME TO PLAY SEEING-EYE DOG IN REVERSE— DON'T TRY TO STOP ME, GERALD

HOW GOOD ARE YOU, COMMANDER?

IF A MAN BREATHES OR MOVES A FINGER WITHIN TWENTY PACES, I CAN GIVE YOU RANGE AND POSITION

WAIT WHILE I RELOAD— YOU CAN PICK YOUR KNIFE UP WHEN WE REACH THE TOP OF THOSE STAIRS, WILLIE... BUT ONLY USE THE TORCH FOR A SPLIT-SECOND AIM

590

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

COMMANDER CHALLON, A BLIND MAN AT HOME IN TOTAL DARKNESS, LEADS THE WAY . . .

DOOR HERE SOMEWHERE

NOBODY WITHIN TWENTY PACES OF IT... I'LL GO THROUGH FIRST AND LISTEN AGAIN

ALONG THE TWISTING CORRIDORS...

THEY'LL BE COMING THIS WAY - YOU KEEP WITH ME, THE OTHERS WAIT HERE... AND DON'T SHINE THAT LIGHT BEFORE I GIVE THE WORD!

591

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

IN THE ENFOLDING DARKNESS, A BLIND MAN COMES INTO HIS OWN.

Two people ahead ...at fifteen yards ...not moving.. there

Take the torch, give me thirty seconds to warn Willie, then put the beam on them, Commander..

..both yours, Willie, and make it hilt not point... We want a few still wriggling for Tarrant— I'll only shoot if I have to

592

MODESTY BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

CHALLON HOLDS THE TORCH AT ARM'S LENGTH... HIS ACUTE HEARING PINPOINTS THE SOUND OF BREATHING, AND THE BEAM LEAPS OUT

WILLIE'S KNIFE BALANCED TO MAKE ONE REVOLUTION IN TWELVE AND-A-HALF FEET, IS THROWN WITH BIAS TO STRIKE HILT FIRST

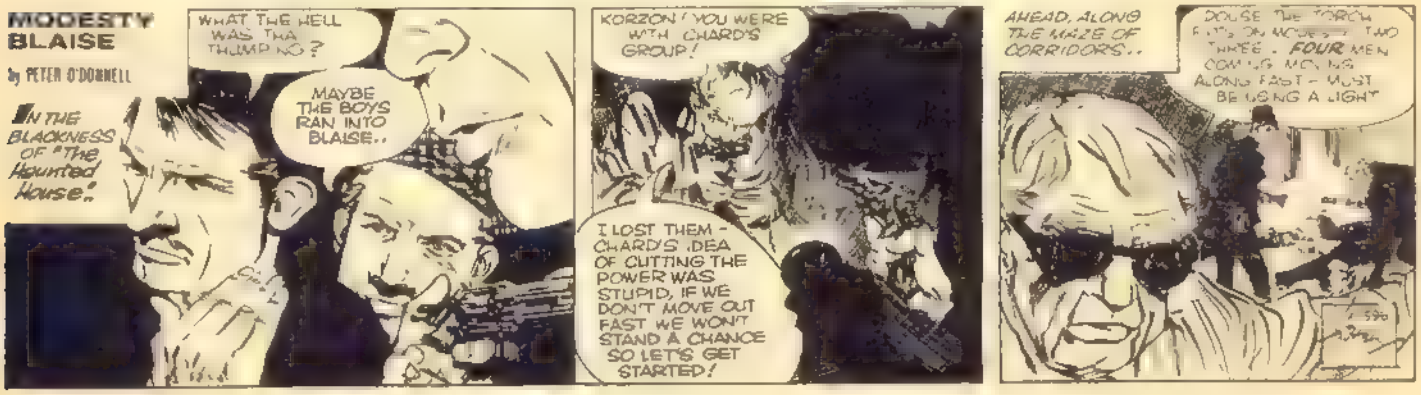
THE SECOND KNIFE IS IN THE AIR AS THE FIRST REACHES ITS TARGET AND MODESTY IS ALREADY ON THE MOVE

HOLD THE BEAM, COMMANDER!

593

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WILLIE'S SECOND KNIFE THUDS HOME
WATCH IT, PRINCESS, THEY'RE ONLY GROGGY — NOT ENOUGH WEIGHT TO CHILL 'EM!
594

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WALTER LUNGES FOR THE GUN
KEEP YOUR EAD DOWN PRINCESS
595


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
IN THE BLACKNESS OF "The Haunted House"
WHAT THE HELL WAS THA THUMP NO?
MAYBE THE BOYS RAN INTO BLAISE..
KORZON / YOU WERE WITH CHARD'S GROUP!
I LOST THEM - CHARD'S IDEA OF CUTTING THE POWER WAS STUPID, IF WE DON'T MOVE OUT FAST WE WON'T STAND A CHANCE SO LET'S GET STARTED!
AHEAD, ALONG THE MAZE OF CORRIDORS..
DOUSE THE TORCH PUTS ON MODE — TWO THREE .. FOUR MEN COMING MOVING ALONG FAST - MUST BE USING A LIGHT
590

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
SHOOT ANYTHING THAT MOVES, AND KEEP GOING
SOMETHING ON THE FLOOR THERE!
KORZON AND HIS MEN MOVE ON THROUGH "The Haunted House"
WALTER AND REINZ — THEY WENT ON AHEAD, KORZON
OUT COLD, BUT ALIVE...
...WHO'S THE THIRD ONE?
ABOVE, MODESTY AND WILLIE ARE BRACED IN AN ARCH BETWEEN THE WALLS OF THE CORRIDOR
591

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL

KORZON STARES DOWN AT A FACE HE DOES NOT KNOW — THE FACE OF COMMANDER CHALLON

DO YOU KNOW THIS ONE IN THE DARK GLASSES?

NO!

HE'S NOT ONE OF OURS, KORZON!

ABOVE, BRACED ACROSS THE PASSAGE MODESTY PINCHES WILLIE'S ARM IN A SIGNAL.

UHH!

AND CHALLON'S FISTS SMASH UPWARDS

598

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL

HELP CHALLON, WILLIE!

NO! THEY KILLED MY JEANNIE! I'LL TAKE NO HELP FOR THIS ONE — OR HINDRANCE!

THE BLIND MAN'S HANDS GRIP KORZON'S THROAT WITH CRUSHING FORCE

599

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL

AS THE BLIND MAN'S GRIP ON KORZON TIGHTENS...

STOP HIM, WILLIE!

YOU'RE TOO LATE... IT WAS THE ONE WITH THE BEARD. THE ONE WHO ORDERED THOSE SWINE TO KILL MY JEANNIE...

600

YES... THAT WAS KORZON

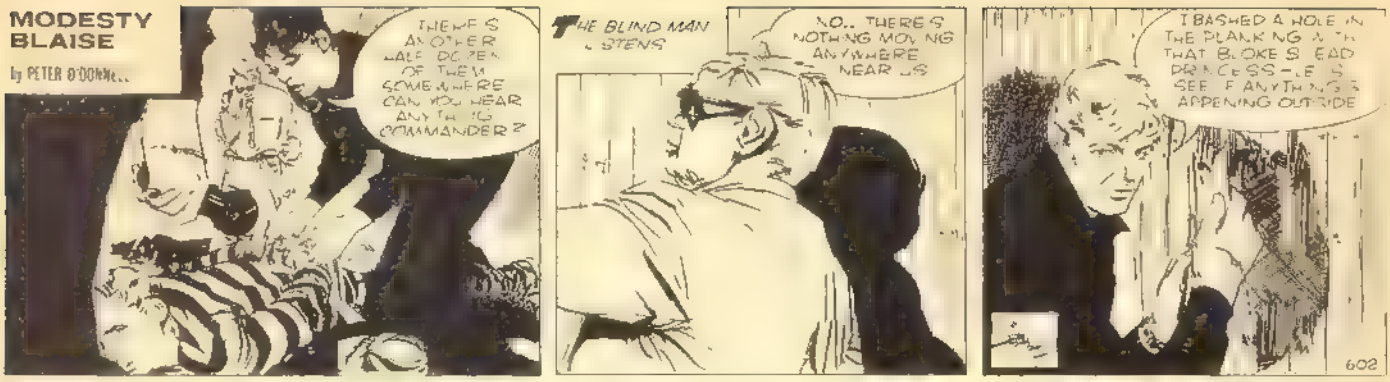
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL

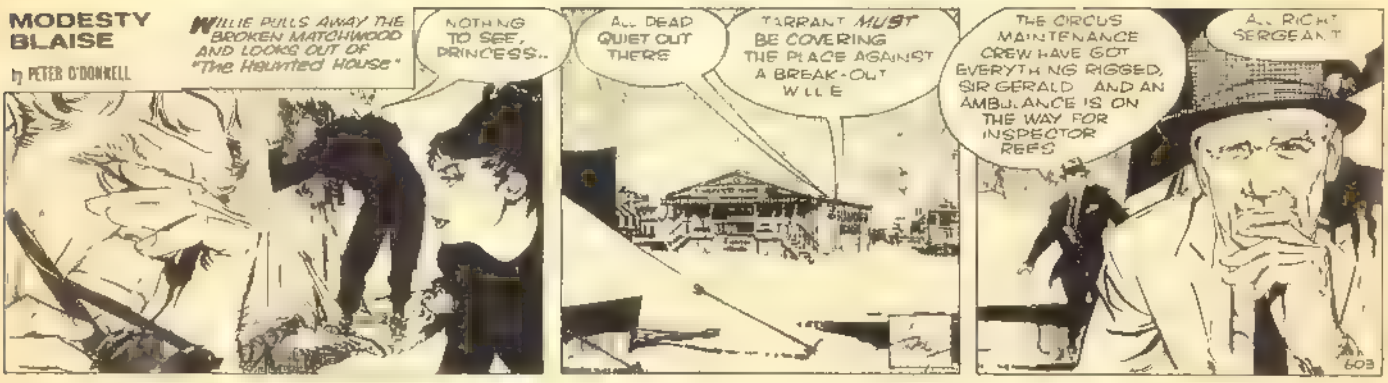
KORZON DIES... AND COMMANDER CHALLON UNLOCKS HIS HANDS FROM THE DEAD MAN'S THROAT..

I'LL TELL THE POLICE YOU TRIED TO STOP ME KILLING HIM

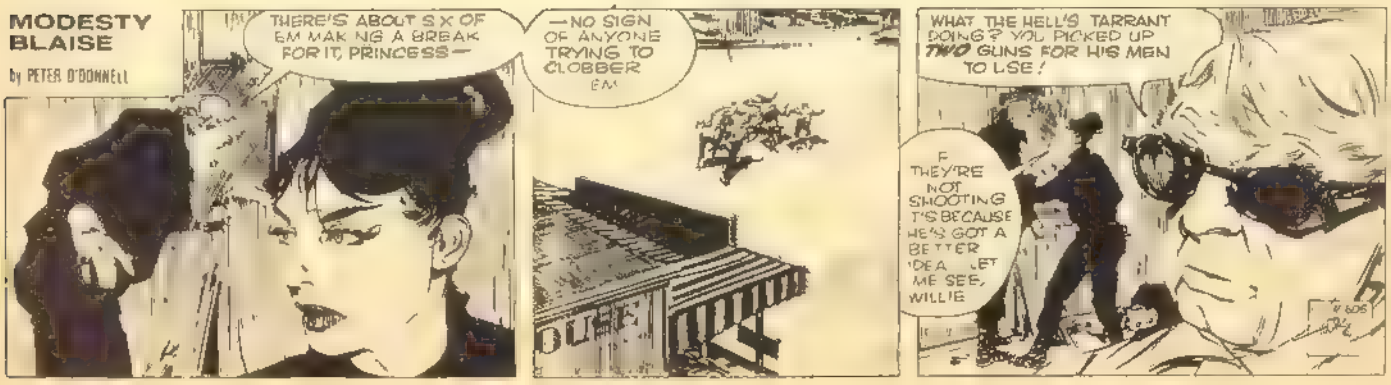
NOT IF I'D GOT TO HIM FIRST WILLIE

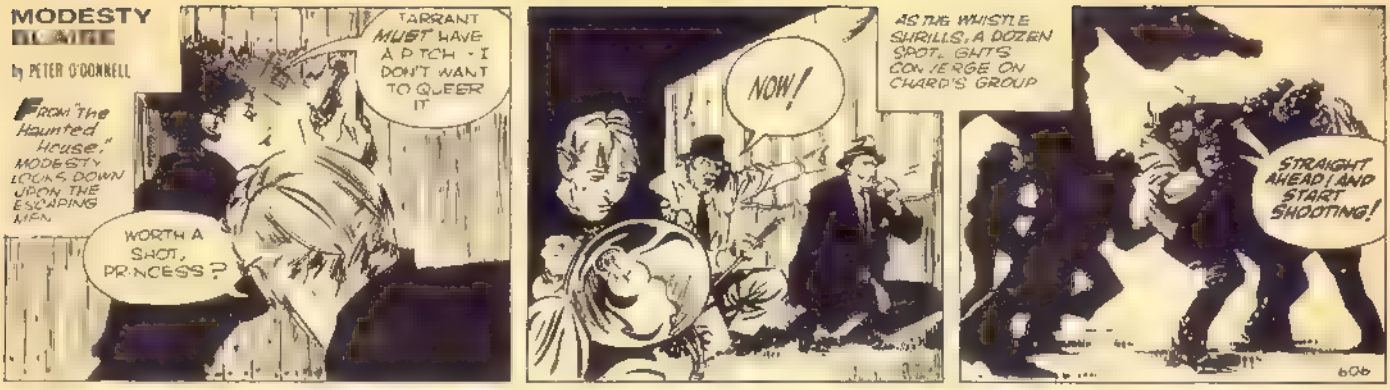
YOU NEEDN'T I WAS GOING TO SIGN THAT BASKET OFF MESELF

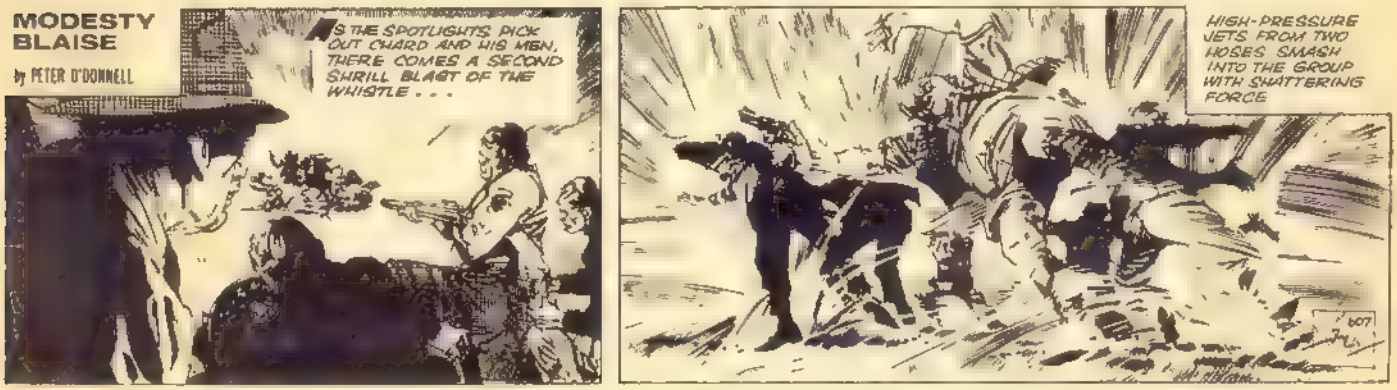

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
THERE'S ANOTHER HALF DOZEN OF THEM SOMEWHERE CAN YOU HEAR ANYTHING COMMANDER?
THE BLIND MAN LISTENS
NO.. THERE'S NOTHING MOVING ANYWHERE NEAR US
I BASHED A HOLE IN THE PLANKING WITH THAT BLOKE'S HEAD PRINCESS - I CAN SEE IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE
602


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WILLIE PEERS AWAY THE BROKEN MATCHWOOD AND LOOKS OUT OF "The Haunted House"
NOTHING TO SEE, PRINCESS..
ALL DEAD QUIET OUT THERE
TARRANT MUST BE COVERING THE PLACE AGAINST A BREAK-OUT WILLIE
THE CIRCUS MAINTENANCE CREW HAVE GOT EVERYTHING RIGGED, SIR GERALD AND AN AMBULANCE IS ON THE WAY FOR INSPECTOR REES
ALL RIGHT SERGEANT
603

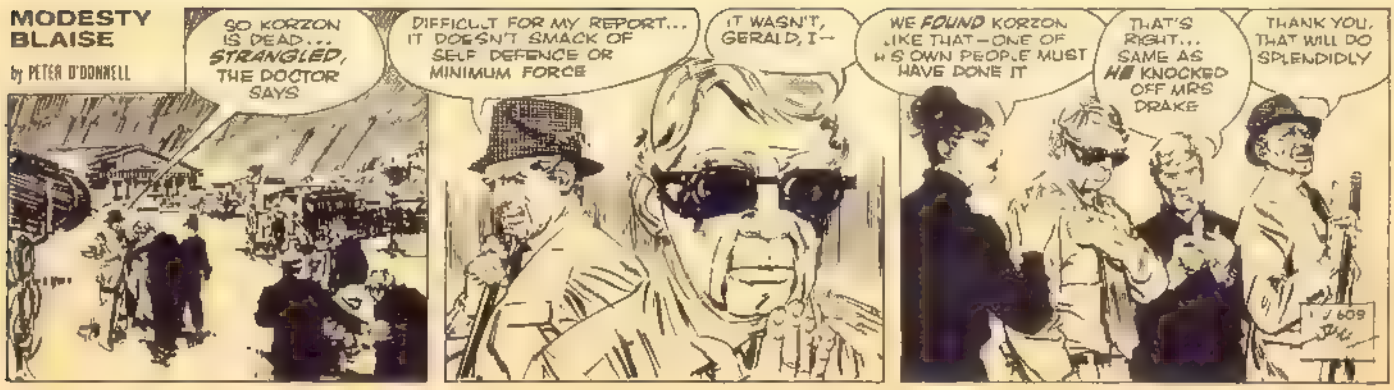
MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
NEAR THE EXIT OF "The Haunted House"
STAY CLOSE TOGETHER MOVE FAST, AND SHOOT DOWN ANYONE WHO GETS BETWEEN US AND THE TRANSPORT
NOW!
HERE COMES A BUNCH OF THEM, SIR!
GET READY WITH THAT WHISTLE
604

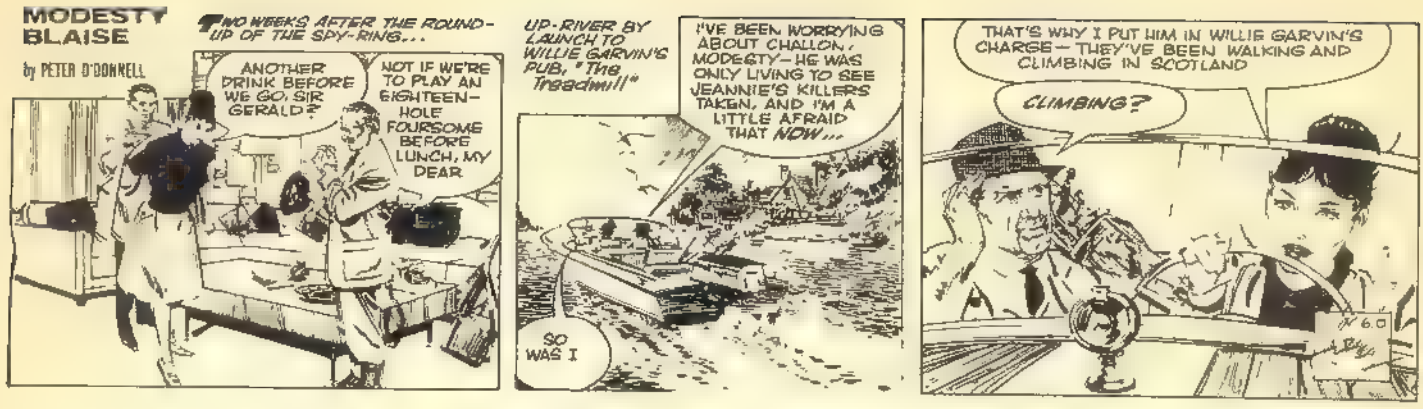

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
THERE'S ABOUT SIX OF 'EM MAKING A BREAK FOR IT, PRINCESS—
—NO SIGN OF ANYONE TRYING TO CLOBBER 'EM
WHAT THE HELL'S TARRANT DOING? YOU PICKED UP TWO GUNS FOR HIS MEN TO USE!
IF THEY'RE NOT SHOOTING IT'S BECAUSE HE'S GOT A BETTER IDEA LET ME SEE, WILLIE
605


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
From the Haunted House, MODESTY LOOKS DOWN UPON THE ESCAPING MEN.
WORTH A SHOT, PRINCESS?
TARRANT MUST HAVE A PITCH - I DON'T WANT TO QUEER IT
NOW!
AS THE WHISTLE SHRILLS, A DOZEN SPOTLIGHTS CONVERGE ON CHARD'S GROUP
STRAIGHT AHEAD! AND START SHOOTING!
606

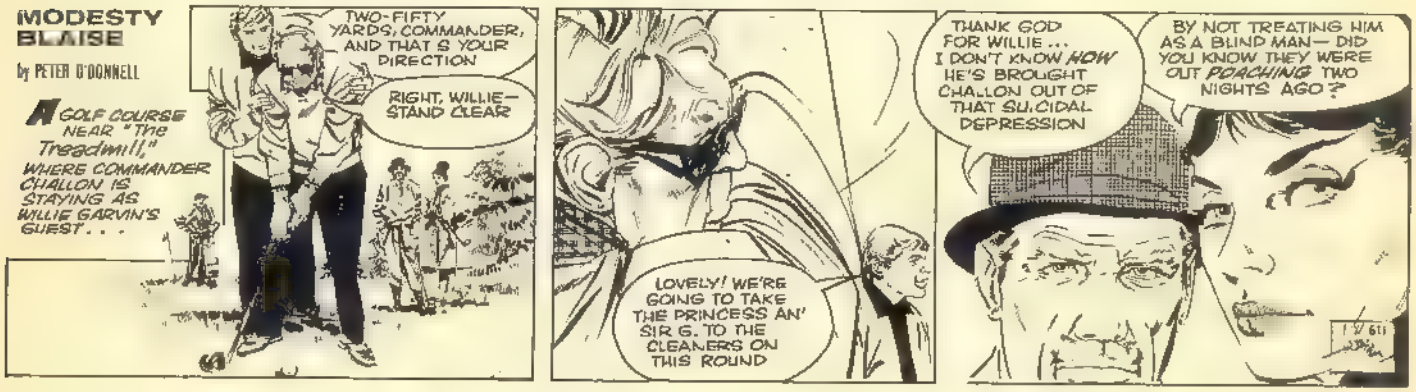

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
AS THE SPOTLIGHTS PICK OUT CHARD AND HIS MEN, THERE COMES A SECOND SHRILL BLAST OF THE WHISTLE . . .
HIGH-PRESSURE JETS FROM TWO HOSES SMASH INTO THE GROUP WITH SHATTERING FORCE
607

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
WHAT'S 'APPENING, PRINCESS?
TAKE A LOOK
THE TWO HIGH-POWERED JETS OF WATER BATTER KORZON'S MEN TO THE GROUND
SIR GERALD HAS PICKED UP A COUPLE OF HYDRANTS AND GOT HOSES GOING
DOES THE JOB AN' SAVES CASUALTIES — A VERY NICE STROKE! 'E'S A CRAFTY OLD BIRD, SIR G...
608

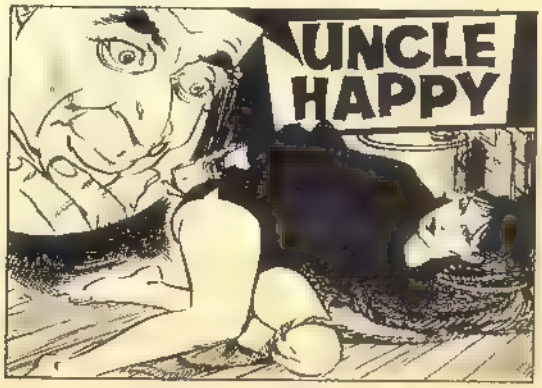

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
SO KORZON IS DEAD... STRANGLED, THE DOCTOR SAYS
DIFFICULT FOR MY REPORT... IT DOESN'T SMACK OF SELF DEFENCE OR MINIMUM FORCE
IT WASN'T, GERALD, I—
WE FOUND KORZON LIKE THAT — ONE OF HIS OWN PEOPLE MUST HAVE DONE IT
THAT'S RIGHT... SAME AS HE KNOCKED OFF MRS DRAKE
THANK YOU, THAT WILL DO SPLENDIDLY
609


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
TWO WEEKS AFTER THE ROUND-UP OF THE SPY-RING...
ANOTHER DRINK BEFORE WE GO, SIR GERALD?
NOT IF WE'RE TO PLAY AN EIGHTEEN-HOLE FOURSOME BEFORE LUNCH, MY DEAR
UP-RIVER BY LAUNCH TO WILLIE GARVIN'S PUB, "The Treadmill"
I'VE BEEN WORRYING ABOUT CHALLON, MODESTY—HE WAS ONLY LIVING TO SEE JEANNIE'S KILLERS TAKEN, AND I'M A LITTLE AFRAID THAT NOW...
SO WAS I
THAT'S WHY I PUT HIM IN WILLIE GARVIN'S CHARGE—THEY'VE BEEN WALKING AND CLIMBING IN SCOTLAND
CLIMBING?

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
SO YOU'RE OFF TO CALIFORNIA NEXT WEEK?
YES... JUST FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS' HOLIDAY
I ENVY YOU... I EVEN ENVY CHALLON... I COULD DO WITH SOME OF THE THERAPY WILLIE'S GIVEN HIM
YOU?
MY DEAR, I PUT JEANNIE CHALLON ON THE JOB THAT KILLED HER—SHE'S NOT THE FIRST AND SHE WON'T BE THE LAST... IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO LIVE WITH


MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
A GOLF COURSE NEAR "The Treadmill" WHERE COMMANDER CHALLON IS STAYING AS WILLIE GARVIN'S GUEST...
TWO-FIFTY YARDS, COMMANDER, AND THAT'S YOUR DIRECTION
RIGHT, WILLIE—STAND CLEAR
LOVELY! WE'RE GOING TO TAKE THE PRINCESS AN' SIR G. TO THE CLEANERS ON THIS ROUND
THANK GOD FOR WILLIE... I DON'T KNOW HOW HE'S BROUGHT CHALLON OUT OF THAT SUICIDAL DEPRESSION
BY NOT TREATING HIM AS A BLIND MAN—DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE OUT POACHING TWO NIGHTS AGO?

STARTING NEXT ISSUE



ASPECTS OF A SCIENTIFIC COMICS ANALYSIS

SPOTLIGHT ON EUROPE

By Christian H. Freitag

(Berlin)

A PERUSAL of the critical literature on research in mass literature in Great Britain and the United States establishes the fact, that especially in the last twenty years, a host of analytical papers on comics have been published. However, these papers have often appeared as one-sided historical or aesthetic analyses of the genre, and haven't taken into consideration the other fundamental aspects which are important in this connection.

Comics as a mass media, with a very wide distribution and effectiveness in the Anglo-Saxon countries, especially need to be researched from sociological, psychological and political points of view. Therefore a few basic theoretical and methodological questions will be pointed out in the following

Scientific method can be characterised first of all by two features

1. It must order and classify and

2 It must also work towards a clarification of the connections and meanings of evidence, as well as the laws of development which lie behind the phenomena

With reference to literary criticism in general and comics research in particular that would mean that such an analysis would on the one hand have to c l a s s i f y its research object according to its empirical forms, and on the other, work out its position and valence in the cultural process

This done, the analysis could then proceed by means of an adequate methodological and conceptual model, to making findings on qualities, causal connections and developmental laws of the genre

The aspects of comics analysis which we wish to present in this essay are to be understood as bases upon a number of premises: mass literature research can arrive at relevant conclusions only in interdisciplinary co-operation. A scientific framework for such an analysis is a materialistic theory of culture, by means of which a dialectical integration of comics as a socially determined and effective phenomenon can be successful.

Comics are not subject to any laws of self-development. They can only be understood when they are considered in the social relationship which brings them forth. As commodities, they are subject to the economic laws of production and consumption of the social order in which they are produced and distributed. Accordingly there are several problem areas to be researched

1. Clarification of the production methods of the comics industry (publishing houses), the structure of the property relationships and the forms of organisation.

2. Clarification of the methods of industrial production of comics, i.e. (a) the historical derivation and the presentation of the scientific-technical procedures of mass reproducibility; (b) the division of labour in planning, development and production; (c) the forms of national and international co-operation at all levels of production and distribution;

3 Clarification of the methods of sales and diffusion (also) by means of other media as well as the magnitude of profit and its distribution

Only a point of departure which clarifies the economic conditions can make possible insights into the essence and connections of a literature as widely diffused as comics, and only this point of departure can support the points of view named in the following.

Insights into the structure of the comics producing industry, pose the unavoidable question about the ideological contents and social-political function of this literature. The social dogmas and prototypes which the ruling classes use to justify and maintain the existing power relationships are to be understood as components of the ruling ideology

Accordingly an analysis which purports to be a criticism of ideology must derive the (ideological) contents diffused throughout comics from the political and economic relationships of society. It must also recognise them as specific kind and form of manipulative interests. In this connection, the typology and meaning of the various forms of comics is to be worked out. When presenting the contents, special stress is to be laid on the combination of word and picture which is proper to comics. A catalogue of motives and metaphors specific to comics must also be made within this framework.

A prerequisite for judging the effect upon the reader of comics is first of all, knowledge about the diffusion of this literature. The methods of the empirical social sciences can at this point in the research process give us information on questions about the development of circulation, the social composition of the readership, readers' reading behaviour, etc. An acquaintence with these factors makes it possible to form an idea about the offer on the one hand and the actual consumption on the other. This circumstance must be researched anew by a socially relevant science of communication in order to discover causes and driving forces. A complex anaysis of the effects of the ideological contents, ideas and prototypes diffused by comics can therefore only be accomplished by a mutually complimentary co-operation of the following scientific disciplines

1. Sociology and the empirical social sciences

2. The communication sciences/social psychology (behavioural dispositions, communications processes specific to various levels of society — "schichtenspezifisch").

3. Pedagogy (socialisation and mass media)

4. Language sciences and Literature (social linguistics, comparative literature, sociology of literature, etc.).

5. History of art and literature (historicising of empirical forms, graphic, etc.).

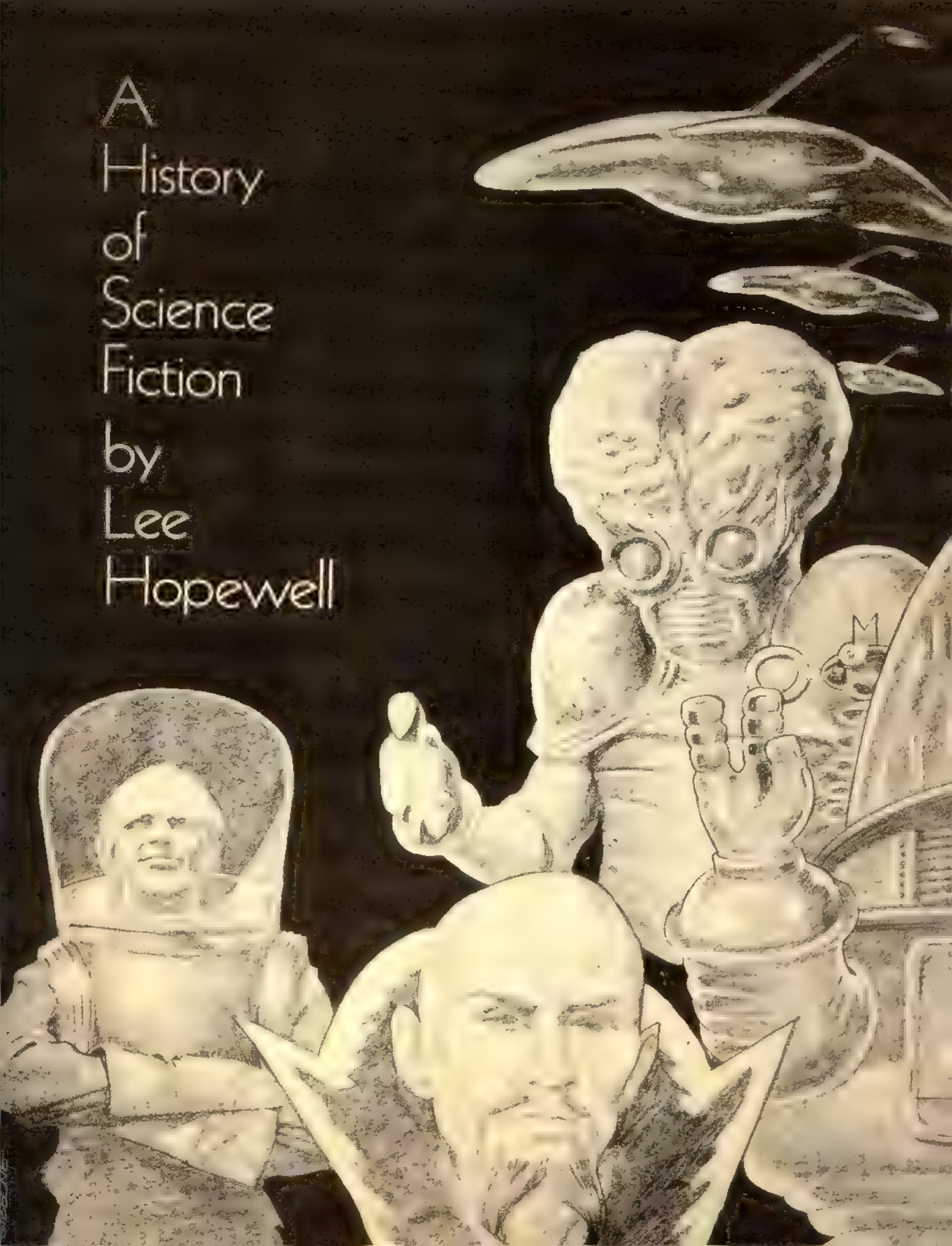
This short review of the problems which a comics analysis poses and the fundamentals of same anylysis is not the place to enter into details on the range of the analysis nor the forms of interdisciplinary co-operation.

As a summarising collection of theses, however, it should have the function of further stimulating systematic work on the basic questions of a comprehensive comics analysis and especially of an adequate methodology.

Notes: Special thanks are due to John Nolte for his help. Christian H. Freitag works at: John-F.-Kennedy-Institut fuer Amerikastudien, 1000 Berlin 33 (Dahlem), Lansstrasse 5-9, Germany. Among others he published a more detailed article on comics anylysis in SPRACHKUNST (Vienna) III (1972).

A History of Science Fiction

by Lee Hopewell



Part 3: The Fabulous Fifties

The decade of the fifties was to prove be one of the most important periods in the history of the literature since its inception. Important new ideas and concepts were introduced that would revolutionise the field as it was then, and set up a chain reaction, the effects of which are still in evidence today. A new mode of communication was brought admirably into play, notably that of the motion picture, and the media of science fiction was thusly introduced to an entirely new audience. The decade of the fifties was, without a doubt, one of the prime factors of shaping s.f. as we know it today.

Many of the new innovations were to occur in the late forties, not the least of these being the introduction of an important new addition to the magazine field - "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction" in 1949. Of more importance to the actual decade of the fifties are two magazines still in existence today "Galaxy" in the autumn of 1950, and "Fantastic Stories" in 1952. Incidentally, no new magazine launched since 1952 has survived to the present day.

In fact, there were three major influences on the shape of science fiction in the fifties, of which magazines were only one. The already mentioned influx of movies was another, and the third was an emergence into the field of a vast amount of new and important talent coupled with the steady maturing of some of the older and already established writers. The fifties - mostly the early part - saw the introduction of many new talents: a galaxy of new names that are well known and revered today; Poul Anderson, Robert Sheckley, Jack Vance, Walter M.Miller, Philip K. Dick, Cordwainer Smith, Philip Jose Farmer.... the list is long. This was also coupled with the return to the field of writers whose output was curtailed by the war, and the development and strong incline towards maturity of the already established talents such as Asimov, Blish, Pohl, Kornbluth, and Bester.

This too, in its own way, influenced the magazine field to the extent of its increased output. With a conglomerate of new talent there followed the launching of many new science fiction magazines to the stalls. The early part of the fifties saw the death of the pulp magazine altogether, and its replacement by the comic book. The written magazines all altered their format from pulp to the easier sized digest magazine form. The science fiction magazines of the era took on an entirely new look.

The quality of the stories from the 1950's speaks admirably for itself. From this era such classic works as "the Space Merchants", "the Lovers", "The Case of Conscience", "more than Human", "The Demolished Man", and "The Caves of Steel" are merely a few random examples from the vast wealth of excellent material that was made available to the reading public at that time. The year 1953 in itself seemed singularly abundant in fine tales, both in the form of novels and short stories/novelettes.

The fifties was the age of the boom in record players and hi-fidelity recording - the hi-fi boom. The term caught on and spread like wildfire. Science fiction had the misfortune to be caught in this category, and thus the term 'sci-fi' came into being. Today, however, the term sci-fi has come to be regarded in fan jargon as derogatory, and pertaining to pseudo s.f.

For the first time, an outside influence gripped science fiction, one that would publicise it to an even wider audience: the motion picture industry. Despite earlier efforts at s.f. movies it was Hollywood's venture into the field in the fifties that established the s.f. movie as a genre in its own right. Earlier vehicles had included Alexander Korda's classic "The Shape of Things to Come", and the Flash Gordon serials starring Buster Crabbe and Charles Middleton as the delightfully evil Ming the Merciless.

Yet the fifties seemed unable to produce a science fiction film that came to be regarded as less than a classic. One of the first of these was Howard Hawks' "The Thing" or "The Thing from Another World" (as it is equally well known as). James Arness portrayed The Thing and Hawks' brilliant camera work (on never letting the audience actually see The Thing clearly) assured the film a permanent place in the horror/s.f. hall of fame.

"The Day the Earth Stood Still", also made in 1951 and directed by Robert Wise, was a fine anti-war allegory,(with Michael Rennie starring as Klaatu, visitor from another galaxy, who comes to earth warning the unheeding populous of the folly of atomic war) and like "The Thing" was based on a magazine story. "The Thing" was adapted from John Campbell's "Who Goes There" and "The Day the Earth Stood Still" from Harry Bates' 'Farewell to the Master". George Pal's "Destination Moon" was based on Willy Ley's factual novel (spectacular, but boring) and his Oscar-winning "War of the Worlds" was a very much altered adaptation of Well's classic.

Later entries into the fifties included "The Forbidden Planet", one of the finest space operas ever filmed and "This Island Earth". "The Blob", starring a very young Steve McQueen, was a very poorly produced teenage thriller that earned itself a cult following for no apparent reason. Surprisingly, however, a lot of low-budget films did turn out well, but it was the large-budget films such as "Invasion of the Body Snatchers", "It came from Outer Space" and the penultimate film of them all, winner of the 1957 Hugo award, "The Incredible Shrinking Man" that one best remembers.

The same fate was to befall the movies as was to befall written s.f. - television.was the cancer.

The late fifties saw a sharp decrease in the amount of written material being read as television viewing shot up. Magazines in every field folded, and with the exception of a few all the s.f. magazines virtually vanished from the newsstands overnight. "Galaxy" and "Fantastic" survived the onslaught, but with a greatly diminished readership.

By the end of the era s.f. was in the despairing position of being able to offer its readers the widest range of story lines it had ever had - but was unable to reach an audience that could fully appreciate it. A further nail for the coffin of the s.f. magazine was the new full-length s.f. paperback novel that was now being issued, which made the regular s.f. magazine rather obsolete and outmoded.

Even the surviving magazines suffered and resorted to peculiar gambits to gain readers. Almost all suffered reductions in page count, and features such as fan pages and book reviews were either cut to the barest minimum or done away with altogether. One magazine, "Fantastic", was written solely by five authors - Ellison, Sleasar, Garrett, Silverberg and Lesser - month after month on a regular salaried basis. The quality picked up in '58 under a new editor, but a few years later the magazine deteriorated into nothing but a run of reprinted stories with very little new material whatsoever.

Prices went up; once upon a time pulp magazines had cost ten cents, but by the end of the fifties the price was up to 50 cents per issue. (Interestingly enough, prices have remained fairly constant until the present day when s.f. is facing another crisis - perhaps there's a moral behind this...).

The quality of the stories also deteriorated during this time. As compared to '53 these were lean times (and present day material is even worse). The air of mystery was lacking as science fact was catching up with science fiction.

By the beginning of the sixties, s.f. was starting to die a very slow death. Hardly optimistic was the fact that the Hugo Award for 1960 for the best fan writing went to Earl Kemp for a piece entitled "Who Killed Science Fiction?" **Lee Hopewell**

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COMICS
Sorry that there is no promised list of the comics that C.M.D.S. is importing as we mentioned last issue. These are still coming in on a regular basis but it is taking a little while to set up the mail order side of it.

THE MEN BEHIND THE SEEKERS

From a recorded conversation in March 1973 between Keith MacKenzie, Art Editor of Associated Newspapers Group Ltd., (who published the Daily Sketch) John Burns and Phillip Douglas - respectively artist and writer of THE SEEKERS.

KM: "The Seekers" was created for the Daily Sketch in, I believe, 1964. Can you tell us a little of its origins?

JB: First and foremost we had an idea for the Evening News which smacked too much of "Modesty Blaise", so we were asked to think up another idea which Julian (Phipps) would take over to the Evening News. We got together - Les (Lilley) and I, and we worked out this idea of "The Seekers" - a sort of Missing Persons Bureau. It was while Julian was taking it to the Evening News that Howard French (editor of the Daily Sketch) saw it and thought it might go in the Sketch. So Julian let him have it.

KM: Who were the characters that made up "The Seekers"?

JB: First of all there was Una Frost - she was the mainstay - in other words the agents' controller. She did occasionally take part in the stories but the basic characters were the brunette Suzanne, and the blond male Jacob. There was also an old character who was dropped about half way through.

KM: Did the plots alter much between the early ones of Les Lilley and, say, Phil Douglas's later ones? Were Les and Phil the only ones to write the strip?

JB: The mainstay of the strip was Les. There was a slight alteration in the type of story. Howard French felt that it was getting a little sordid and so we glossed it up a bit.

KM: I think that the story is a question of building up the dramatic conflict which is probably a lot faster than scripting a movie, say, James Bond?

PD: Absolutely - and it must be done every three pictures, which is every day. You must have a minor curtain or cliff-hanger every day and especially at weekends.

JB: That's hard because you don't know when your weekend will fall.

PD: We got to a pitch when our weeks flowed in when we had a missing day, so we decided it was simpler to have a small cliff-hangar every day, then you can use any day for your weekend one.

KM: You certainly must have a minor recap at the beginning of each week. Was it your idea that they should get into one jam after another without too much padding in between? And do you bear in mind that it's got to be basically a pictorial matter, so that however involved the dialogue, it's got to be something which the artist can get his teeth into?

PD: Oh yes, definitely!

KM: In fact most scriptwriters do a synopsis of the scenario or whatever they suggest, which may or may not be adapted as they go along?

PD: And this must be the blue print!

KM: But what about the danger of confusion - of people getting things wrong? Do you think you've got to simplify?

PD: I found, or I find now that you've got to forget that - if a reader falls away and comes back a week later - it's just too bad. Because you haven't got time to pull up the slack each day.

KM: Do you cater for the reader who may have dropped off for a week or two or a month or two and comes back and says, "right, I'm going to start reading this thing now and maybe get hooked again - as I do probably in "Modesty Blaise" - I don't read it every week."?

PD: I think you have to pick up just as you would have to pick up a soap opera on the television. No one is going to stop and explain to you that this is what's going on. You just can't afford to.

JB: Don't forget that the actual story doesn't last longer than two to three months - say ten weeks.

PD: And in every new story you introduce at least some information that "here we have an organization who are looking for missing people, etcetera". Just once, perhaps, in that story!

KM: But let's get back to John. You start with the day's 'shooting script' and you do it one day at a time?

JB: First I start to read it. Then, I'd reread it when I am doing the actual artwork. I would do the whole week at a time, not pencil one day, ink in one day. The whole week is laid out in pencil form very roughly, then cleaned up again, until you finally end up at the basic inking-in stage.

KM: Do you do this on layout paper or the finished card?

JB: On to the final card because of the time factor, and from then on, you've worked out your lines, your hatchings, your blacks, your design. So it's just a mere factor of inking-in.

KM: Once you've got it in pencil you've got to work at your black masses, your tone etc?

JB:This is worked out in the pencil stage. I feel I draw my pencil stage drawings up to such a stage that any competant artist could ink it in from that and finish up with a similar result. Because all the work has gone into the pencilling

KM: But doesn't this make inking a chore?

JB: In a way it is, because all the effort has gone into the pencils. The pencil point is so more sympathetic, consequently the inking-in is a bind, in fact. If newspapers could reproduce the pencil drawings, they would get far livelier drawings.

KM: The fact that you are able to bash away with a pen and slap it on with a brush, possibly gives it a little bit of freedom of character and drawing which might look laboured if you had worried too much on it. I think some of David Wright's "Carol Day" drawings look as if so much work had gone in that it almost looked laboured. That's a fine point. One important aspect in the visual as-

pect is the speech balloons - one's got to remember where they come in and you obviously have to allow for them.

JB: One must draw and compose the picture to take the balloons. Invariably the balloons are at the top - this is where the writer needs to have visual imagination and know what the scene is going to be, when he gets his people speaking, so that you read left from right.

KM: I suggested to Tony Weare that he could break down the frames in "Matt Marriott" of the three or four a day, but he said he couldn't do that unless the scriptwriter gave him a different sort of dialogue. It was impossible if every frame had two people conversing.

JB: I disagree. I spent three weeks drawing two people talking in a room and it can be done - you can break the frame. It takes a bit of thinking, you have to work your characters but I think visually it can be done.

PD: Of course a professional writer should be on the lookout for that and shouldn't allow it to happen. In order to stick two people together for a long time he must be able to think visually himself.

JB: You can break a frame, whether there's two people talking or a hundred and two, it's purely a visual thing.

KM: Phil, are you sometimes surprised by the way that John has interpreted your dialogue?

JB: (interrupting) Often!

KM: Because although I call myself an editor, John in fact also edits and mucks about with what you've written, which you'll admit has to be done.

PD: Certainly, and it can be both disappointing and pleasant. But more often than not it's a pleasant surprise because there must always be the 'art-plus'. It can only be an improvement, once it's drawn.

KM: Getting back to the pure nuts and bolts of the thing, John, how do you get your references, pictures, etc?

JB: I use a Polaroid camera quite a lot.

KM: Live models are difficult, I suppose, unless your wife has half an hour to spare?

JB: One does hear of people using live models but there is the time factor again there, you see.

KM: I find, for example, that in "Rip Kirby" all the women look the same - I never know whether it's the girl-friend, the wife, the mother, the aunt or the maid - they all look the same to me.

JB: That's just bad drawing!!

KM: On "The Seekers" we always used to have a weekly conference, where the writer - in this case, Phil - brought in one or two week's scripts. He would go through them with myself and John. We'd then try and make sure that we knew what was going on and that it would work and whether any alterations were going to be necessary. Actually, this is probably rare in some cases like America, or in other strips where the writer and the artist work at long distance. This happens in the case of "Matt Marriott" - Tony Weare and Jim Edgar. Jim sends the script to Tony, who illustrates it and only then do I see it. There is no discussion.

JB: All the editing is done by yourself?

KM: That's true. And if I can't understand it, I reckon the reader can't understand it.

JB: And also, the writer puts his work on the line to be criticised; but luckily the artist doesn't! There was no come-back to my artwork - or not much - I did have the last say.

KM: No, if he says that's not how I saw it...

JB: Then that's just too bad!

KM: Then there's the question of introducing new characters because you've got the identification problem. People are going to say "who is this?". So you've got to try and establish new characters fairly easily.

JB: I think when you create the new characters they must have something that is a visual aid of recognition.

KM: And you've got to refer to them by name several times?

JB: Yes, but the reader can't always see the name when he looks at the strip first. So if you have one character in a check shirt it helps if he retains that check shirt.

KM: OK, but in general, do you think it has been a successful arrangement?

JB: Yes, because I could ask Phil how he'd like a particular thing illustrated or perhaps a scene could be discussed where it would be more advantageous for the artist to draw it totally different to the way the writer saw it. The writer could then re-jig it to fit.

PD: I think this prevents a flagging strip where the Editor keeps a tight rein on the writer and artist by meeting them periodically, by looking after the readers' interest and keeping the story up to scratch.

KM: I'm about to have a "Flook" conference with Wally Fawkes (Trog) and Barry Norman. Well, Wally is, shall we say, 70% of "Flook" and he's had five or six scriptwriters over the years. The scriptwriter, however well-known (and he could be George Melly, Humphrey Littleton or Barry Norman) bows to the fact that Wally knows what will work best. But of course Wally also wants the best dialogue that his writer can provide. So that very little of Barry's funny jokes and bon mots are lost. Only when Wally says they won't work. He has been doing the strip for 25 years, so he should know! So from that point of view it does work; but do you think that in other strips in other parts of the world, like America, for example, they don't follow this sort of procedure? Or do they have a panel or writers churning the stuff out?

JB: One can only go on what one reads, not being there in person. I did read somewhere that Alex Raymond went up once

ONE MORE PIE SHOULD DO IT!
HOW ARE YOU DOING MAJOR?
"TERRIBLE" IN FACT, I THINK YOU'VE GOT "I'M STUCK"!
WHY DON'T YOU GO ON A DIET?
"THEN YOU'D BETTER GET ON A DIET FAST"
BE "AREFUL" TO MY...
IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THE ALIENS MAJOR BENELIX WAS GETTING FAST IN A SMALL WINDOW AND SUSANNE HAS HAD TO PULL HIM OUT AGAIN!
THANKS SUSANNE
OOOH!
MINUTES LATER...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M STRIPPING DOWN TO BARE ESSENTIALS! PERHAPS I'LL BE ABLE TO GET THROUGH THAT ROTTEN LITTLE WINDOW
COME ON MAJOR - GIVE ME A LEG UP TO THE WINDOW
I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA SUSANNE YOU COULD FALL AND BREAK YOUR NECK
THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE! IF I CAN'T GET OUT THEN WE'LL BOTH BE KILLED BY THE MAN AS EXECUTIONER!
HOW ARE YOU DOING?
THE 36 AND 22 BITS OF ME ARE THROUGH BUT THE 37 IS PROVING A BIT OF A SQUEEZE!

a month for "Rip Kirby" conferences.

KM: He drew it but who wrote it?

JB: He also helped write it, I understand.

KM: Of course this happened to a certain extent with "Carol Day" in David Wright's day too.

JB: But I think it only happens in national strips where the writer, artist and art editor for the strip get together.

KM: Well, on the whole, you felt that it worked in the case of "The Seekers"?

JB: Yes, well, I found, very much so!

PD: General discussion on other artists and writers: I know personally how it doesn't work because I write for Spanish artists - we never meet, and the end result leaves a lot to be desired! We are two different nationalities and my English word has to be translated, and in translation things get changed! Then it's drawn up, but it's too late, and it is sent over to the editor who must put it through to the printers.

JB: It would be too costly to redraw over here?

PD: Yes, I think we were onto a good thing by having this regular team meeting on "The Seekers".

KM: In fact it would be even better if you could, say, meet the editor of the paper you were working for and find out his reactions?

JB: Yes, very much so.

PD: I agree.

KM: But unfortunately editors seem to regard strip cartoon as a world of their own. That's why they create jobs for people like me who protect them from these strange people, strip writers and artists! We were just talking about the number of strips which have been reproduced since the thing started and it works out at five a year over five years, twenty-five stories in all.

JB: In the last two years we've shortened the stories so they would be even more fast-moving.

KM: Shorter stories are prefered in syndication - about ten weeks. As far as you were concerned, Phil, which of the stories did you like?

PD: Well apart from the last one, "Goddess of the Seven Moons", which I liked because it was a departure from the usual Seekers story. I think the one that was my favourite to write was the Una Frost story where she had a transplant, with the enemy controlling her brain, to the Seeker's peril. I thought it was a very good adventure.

KM: Yes, I agree. I seem to remember that we sometimes had difficulty in thinking up a new plot, and generally on these occasions the conferences were useful because out of the three different people's ideas one generally got what would or wouldn't work.

PD: Of course there was the famous occasion when Lord Rothermere rang up Julian and said that he didn't know what was going on and we hastily had to simplify things slightly.

JB: I think this was mainly because of the dialogue.

PD: He picked a particular week when Jacob and Suzanne were on the rooftop in Switzerland, escaping, and doing it as they always did everything - very flippantly. They were always making cracks, and I think his Lordship must have come in on a day when he didn't understand the humour of what was going on. It looked to flippant and incomprehensible.

KM: I'd like to bring up the question of nudity in strips. Girls taking off their clothes and appearing bare-bosomed and so forth - this has come in in the last five to ten years. Before this time one never got anything more than dear old "Jane" in the Daily Mirror stripping down to her bra and panties.

PD: And nothing since!

KM: But even so, strips are still not as permissive as the cinema today.

PD: Unfortunately!

KM: I mean the controls are stricter, I couldn't let pubic hair into strips today.

PD: Just as well if you ask me!

KM: I could go out and buy twenty magazines featuring naked girls but I could not publish one in the Daily Mail. I've even, on occasions, had to take out the odd nipple from "Tiffany Jones".

JB: But never from "The Seekers"!

KM: No, John, I always left them in in the Sketch.

PD: Were there ever any complaints?

KM: The theory is that the paper goes into all family homes and you must consider the family angle. Getting back to when the strip first started in the Sketch, would it have been unthinkable to have Suzanne in the nude?

JB: Yes, undressing completely. Panties and bra were acceptible and were looked forward to - by everyone from the Art Editor down! But never (unless a back view of course) completely nude.

PD: But then it was suddenly discovered and discussed that our heroine never wore undies. Which was very convenient, because when she had to swim or climb a tree or go down a cliff she would often use her dress as a rope. She would then have nothing on underneath, we could get away with our naked girl! A good reason to have one - she had no undies on!

JB: One wonders about "Modesty Blaise" now, because that was always one of her shock tactics - to strip down to bra and underclothes when confronting her enemies.

KM: Yes, and put them in a state of confusion! I don't know whether you see the one in the Sun - "Scarth" - but that's fairly innocuous it seems to me. Why is it as far as English papers are concerned, that the woman is the dominating one - Modesty Blaise, Suzonne Dove, Jane, Scarth? Because the paper is largely bought by men?

JB: Perhaps this is accounted for by the fact that the male takes the paper to work and so one assumes that things must be geared to attract the man. They feel that the female as heroine would be more acceptable, unless you have the opposite, which is someone like "Garth".

KM: I mean, the new strip project we have been talking about now (very hush-hush) is about a super-female, is it not? That's what the editor wants - she must be all-powerful, all glamorous, all-potent.

PD: I think you can say that a male will go for a female character and a female will also identify with a heroine. But not necessarily a male being interested in a male hero-figure.

KM: I haven't studied "Barbarella", so I don't know what the motivation theory is there.

JB: Sex!!!

KM: And that note of female chauvinist piggery is perhaps a good one to end our discussion on!

THE TUCKWELLS (Sunday Citizen - 1966.

PROFILE OF JOHN BURNS

He is considered by many to be the outstanding strip cartoon draughtsman working in England. Two qualities which contribute to this mastery are his ability to draw beautiful women and his expression of figures in violent action.

John Burns was born in Wickford, Essex, and was brought up in the East End of London, the youngest in a family of five.

He had no formal art training and started as an apprentice at the age of 16 in an illustration studio, Link House, under Doris White, where he worked on various children's strips and comics, such as "Girl's Crystal", "School Friend", "Boys World" and "Eagle".

He worked on several other publications including being called up for three years) before "The Seekers" was launched by the Daily Sketch in 1964, which kept him busy until a year after it merged with the Daily Mail in 197-. In addition to other work he has drawn for 'count down" for the last three years.

John Burns is married, with two daughters and lives in Trethevey near Tintagel, Cornwall.

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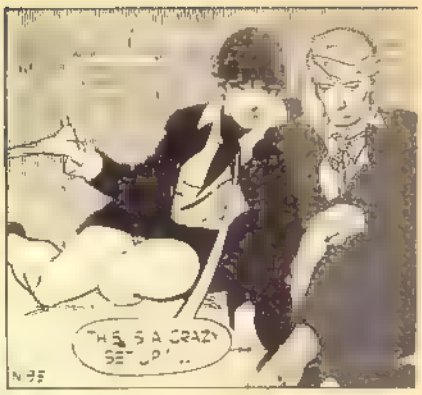
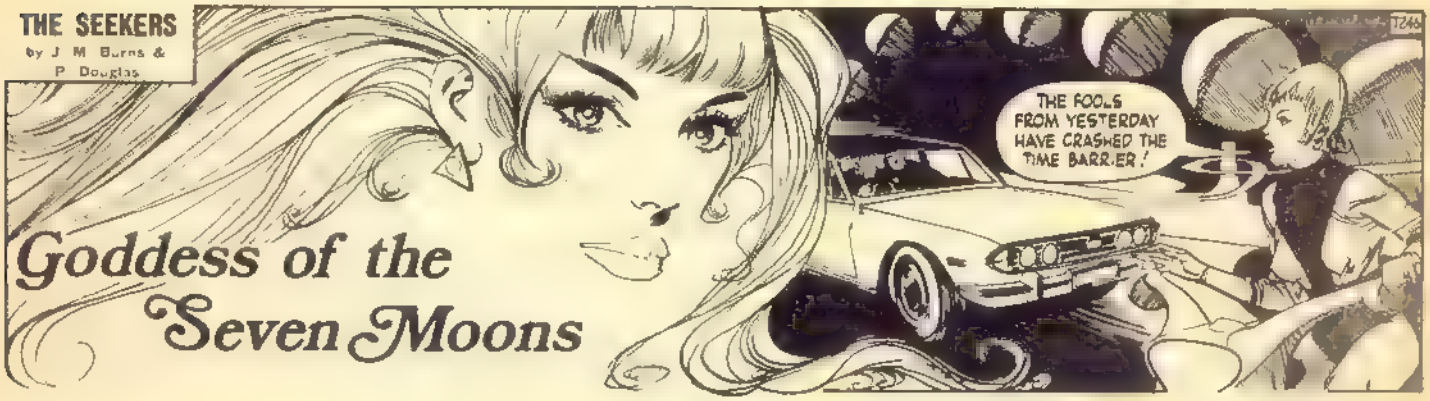
THE SEEKERS

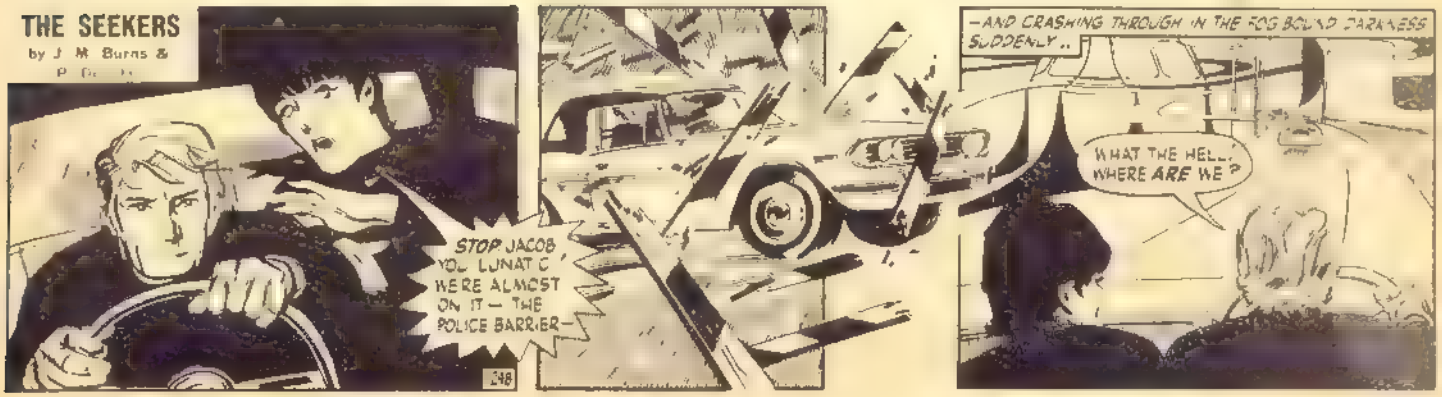


art: John Burns

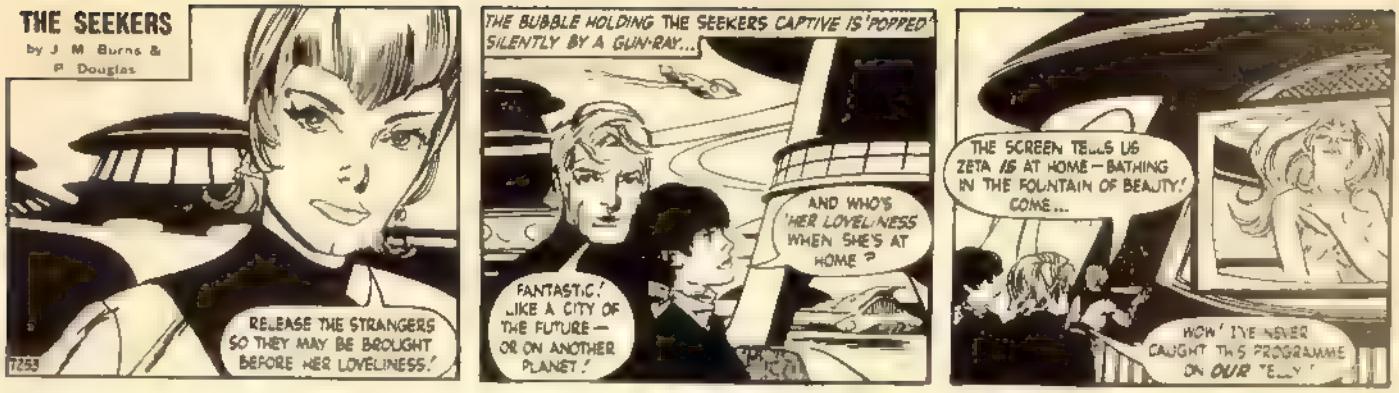
story: Phil Douglas

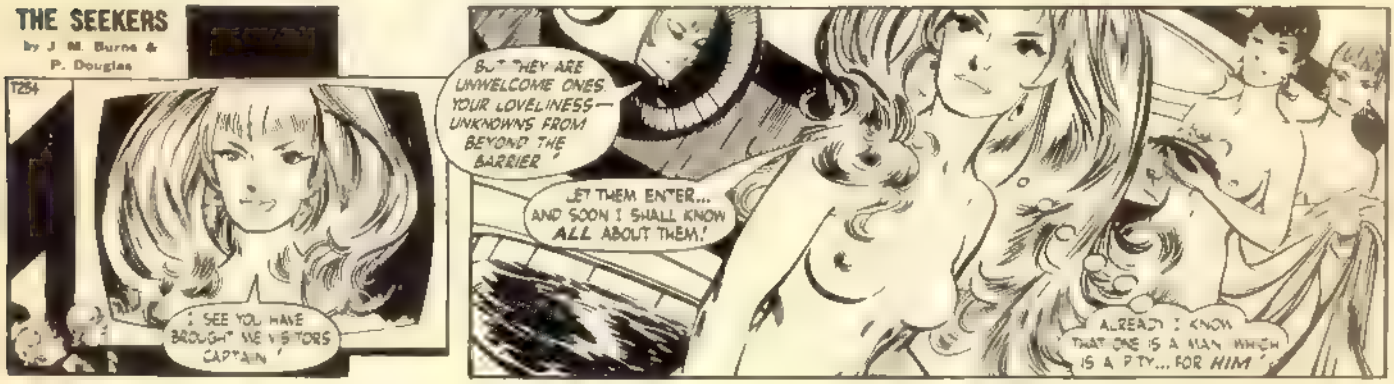


THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns & P Douglas
SUDDEN FOG HITS THE MOTORWAY AS SEEKERS JACOB BENEDICK AND SUSANNE DOVE RETURN TO LONDON WITH VITAL EVIDENCE ABOUT A MISSING BOOK PUBLISHER...
IT'LL WRAP UP THE PELHAM CASE! END OF CHAPTER!
SLOW DOWN FOR GOD'S SAKE-- THERE'S A ROAD BLOCK AHEAD!
JACOB! WE'LL BE WRAPPED UP— IN SHROUDS—IF YOU DON'T STOP DRIVING LIKE A LUNATIC!


THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
STOP JACOB YOU LUNATIC! WE'RE ALMOST ON IT— THE POLICE BARRIER—
—AND CRASHING THROUGH IN THE FOG BOUND DARKNESS SUDDENLY..
WHAT THE HELL! WHERE ARE WE?

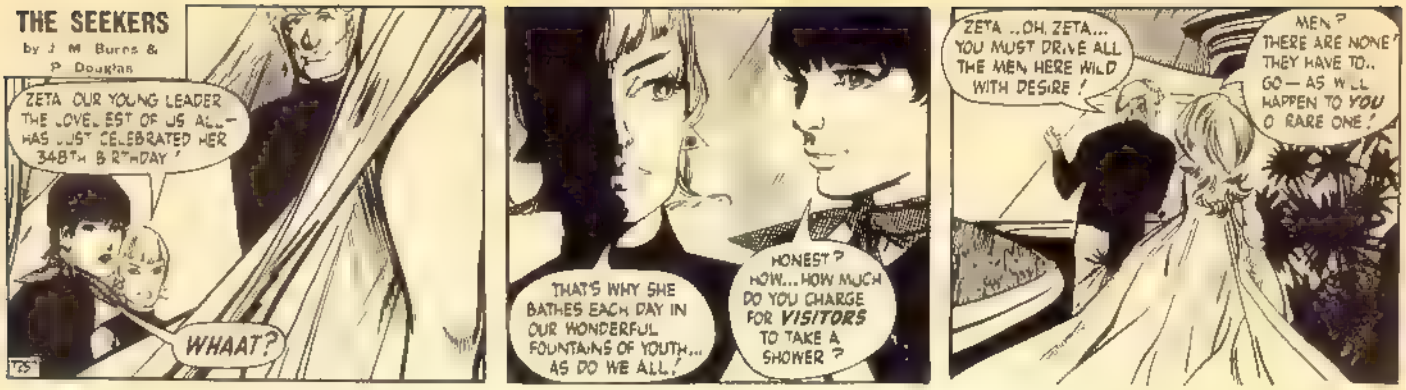
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns & P Douglas
T249
STOP THEM! THE FOOLS HAVE CRASHED THE TIME BARRIER!
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns & P Douglas
JACOB, WHAT... WHAT'S GOING ON? ARE WE DREAMING?
IF WE ARE I SURE DON'T WANT TO WAKE UP DEAD! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE —WHEREVER HERE IS!
T250
THE LOVELIES COMMAND YOU TO STOP!
HER GUN— LOOK WHAT IT'S SHOOTING STRAIGHT AT US!
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns & P Douglas
INFORMED THAT THEY HAVE CRASHED SOME KIND OF TIME BARRIER THE SEEKERS FIND THEMSELVES BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE LOVELIES WHO PATROL THIS FUTURISTIC MOTORWAY...
T251
LOOK! IT'S LIKE A TRANSPARENT BALLOON SHE'S SHOOTING AT US— GROWING BIGGER ALL THE TIME!
I'VE HEARD OF BUBBLY GUM—BUT THIS IS R.D.CULOUS!
NOT TO MENTION PETRIFYING! JACOB! IT'S ENCLOSING US— WE'RE TRAPPED INSIDE IT!
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns & P Douglas
SUSANNE AND JACOB ARE TRAPPED INSIDE A GIANT PLASTIC BUBBLE...
T252
...AND TOWED INTO CUSTODY BY THE LOVELIES...
NO GOOD—THIS STUFF'S INDESTRUCTIBLE! AND HERE'S ONE BENT NAILFILE TO PROVE IT!
SO LIKE IT OR NOT WE'RE TO BE TAKEN FOR A RIDE LIKE A COUPLE OF GOLDFISH!
BUT THE MORE I SEE OF THE SCENERY HERE THOUGH, THE MORE I LIKE IT!

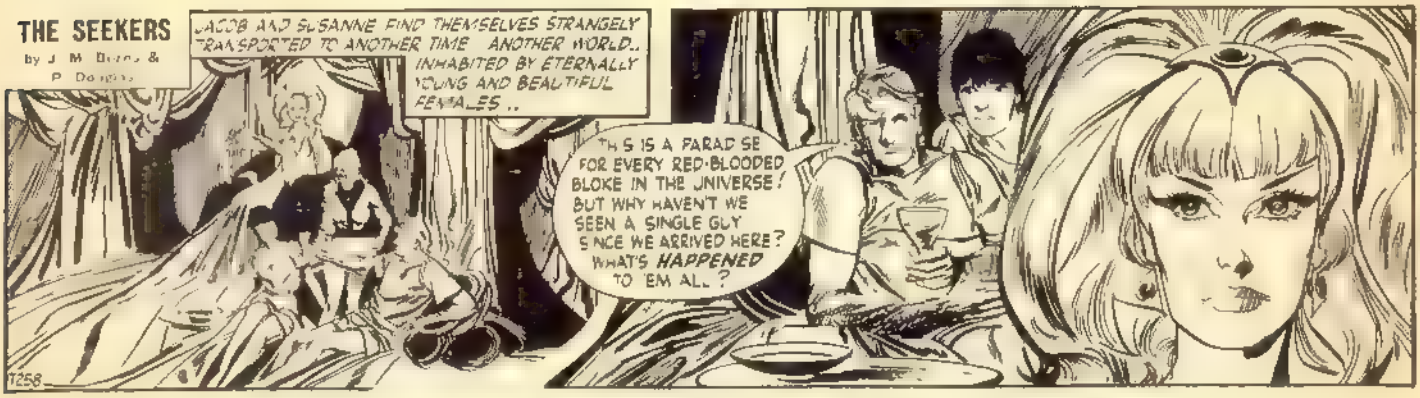

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns & P. Douglas
RELEASE THE STRANGERS SO THEY MAY BE BROUGHT BEFORE HER LOVELINESS.'
THE BUBBLE HOLDING THE SEEKERS CAPTIVE IS 'POPPED' SILENTLY BY A GUN-RAY...
FANTASTIC! LIKE A CITY OF THE FUTURE— OR ON ANOTHER PLANET!
AND WHO'S 'HER LOVELINESS' WHEN SHE'S AT HOME?
THE SCREEN TELLS US ZETA IS AT HOME—BATHING IN THE FOUNTAIN OF BEAUTY! COME...
WOW! I'VE NEVER CAUGHT THIS PROGRAMME ON OUR TELLY!

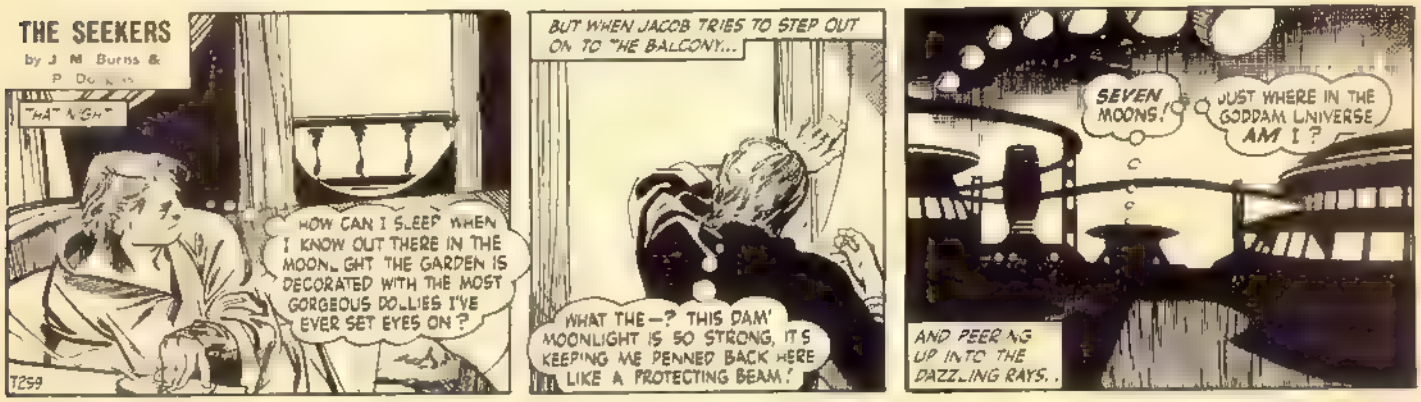

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns & P. Douglas
I SEE YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME VISITORS CAPTAIN!
BUT THEY ARE UNWELCOME ONES YOUR LOVELINESS— UNKNOWNS FROM BEYOND THE BARRIER!
LET THEM ENTER... AND SOON I SHALL KNOW ALL ABOUT THEM!
ALREADY I KNOW THAT ONE IS A MAN WHICH IS A PITY... FOR HIM!

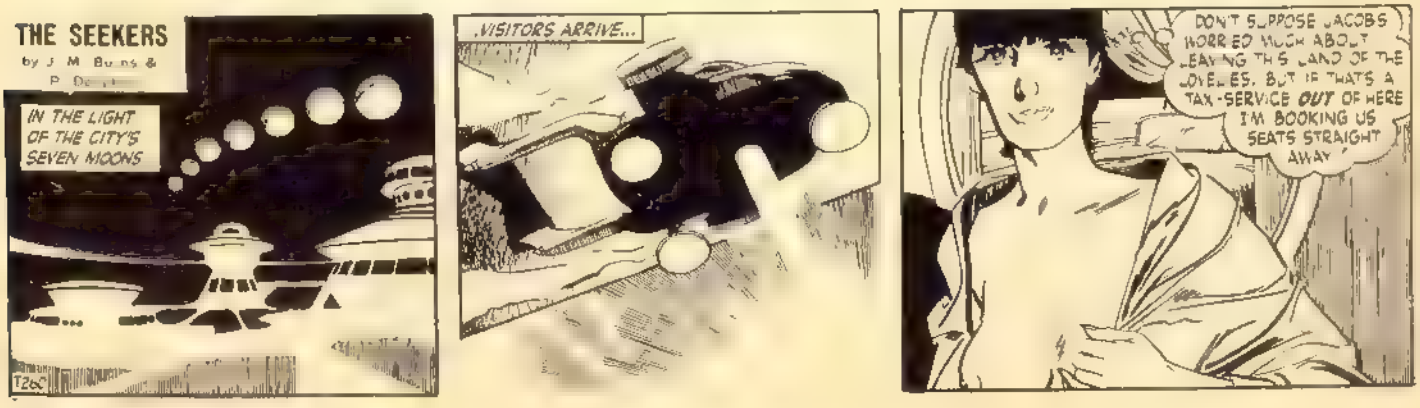
THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns & P. Douglas
PREPARE TO MEET ZETA OUR LEADER...
I'M SORRY IF I KEPT YOU WAITING. I HAVE BEEN BATHING IN THE FOUNTAINS...
AH ME, IF ONLY I LOOKED LIKE THAT WHEN I STEP OUT OF THE TUB!
WOW! SHE CERTAINLY GETS MY VOTE FOR 'MISS WORLD'
ONLY WHICH WORLD, JACOB?

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns & P. Douglas
THE MAN... COME HERE! I WANT YOU CLOSER.
CLOSER? SURE, YOU BET!
MIND YOU DON'T TRIP OVER YOUR TONGUE, LOVER!
ANYONE EVER TELL YOU YOU'RE THE MOST BREATH-TAKING THING EVER INVENTED, YOUR LOVELINESS?
FOR ONCE IN HIS LIFE THE NO-GOOD WOLF IS RIGHT. SHE'S SO YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL IT HURTS!
HEY, WHAT HAVE I SAID THAT'S AMUSED YOU, SUDDENLY?

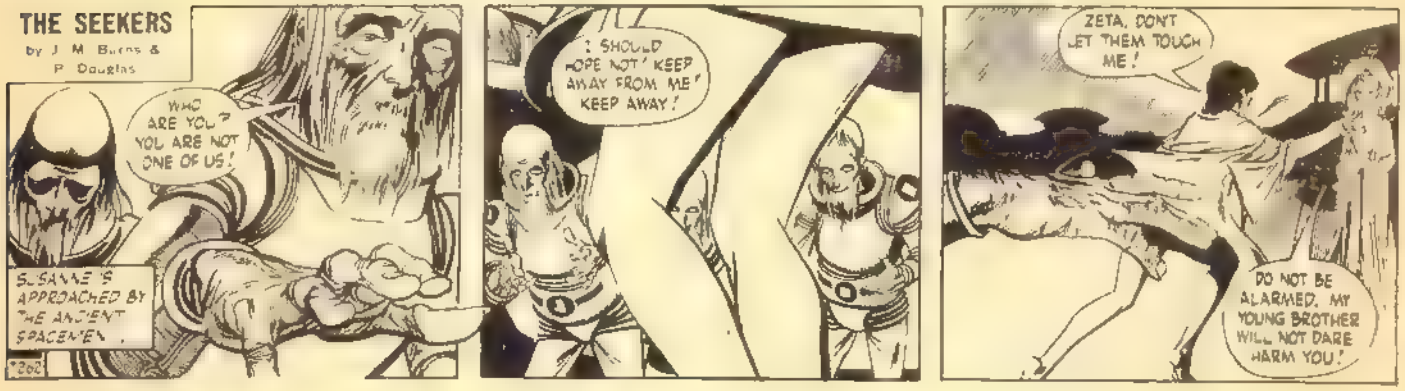

THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
ZETA OUR YOUNG LEADER THE LOVELIEST OF US ALL— HAS JUST CELEBRATED HER 348TH BIRTHDAY!
WHAAT?
THAT'S WHY SHE BATHES EACH DAY IN OUR WONDERFUL FOUNTAINS OF YOUTH... AS DO WE ALL!
HONEST? WOW... HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE FOR VISITORS TO TAKE A SHOWER?
ZETA ..OH, ZETA... YOU MUST DRIVE ALL THE MEN HERE WILD WITH DESIRE!
MEN? THERE ARE NONE! THEY HAVE TO.. GO— AS WELL HAPPEN TO YOU O RARE ONE!


THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
JACOB AND SUSANNE FIND THEMSELVES STRANGELY TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER TIME ANOTHER WORLD.. INHABITED BY ETERNALLY YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL FEMALES ..
THIS IS A PARADISE FOR EVERY RED-BLOODED BLOKE IN THE UNIVERSE! BUT WHY HAVEN'T WE SEEN A SINGLE GUY SINCE WE ARRIVED HERE? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO 'EM ALL?
T258


THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
THAT NIGHT
HOW CAN I SLEEP WHEN I KNOW OUT THERE IN THE MOONLIGHT THE GARDEN IS DECORATED WITH THE MOST GORGEOUS DOLLIES I'VE EVER SET EYES ON?
T259
BUT WHEN JACOB TRIES TO STEP OUT ON TO THE BALCONY...
WHAT THE—? THIS DAM' MOONLIGHT IS SO STRONG, IT'S KEEPING ME PENNED BACK HERE LIKE A PROTECTING BEAM!
SEVEN MOONS!
JUST WHERE IN THE GODDAM UNIVERSE AM I?
AND PEERING UP INTO THE DAZZLING RAYS..


THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
IN THE LIGHT OF THE CITY'S SEVEN MOONS
T260
VISITORS ARRIVE...
DON'T SUPPOSE JACOBS WORRIED MUCH ABOUT LEAVING THIS LAND OF THE LOVELIES. BUT IF THAT'S A TAX-SERVICE OUT OF HERE I'M BOOKING US SEATS STRAIGHT AWAY!

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns &
P. Douglas
HI! NOT WANTING TO OVERSTAY OUR WELCOME, CAN MY PARTNER AND I SCROUNGE A LIFT FROM YOU WHEN YOU TAKE OFF AGAIN?
T.2a
THEN, AS THE DESCENDING FIGURE TURNS TO FACE SUSANNE...
AAAGH!
T'S AJAK ZETA'S YOUNG BROTHER AGED 350!


THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns &
P. Douglas
WHO ARE YOU? YOU ARE NOT ONE OF US!
SUSANNE IS APPROACHED BY THE ANCIENT SPACEMEN.
T.2c
I SHOULD HOPE NOT! KEEP AWAY FROM ME! KEEP AWAY!
ZETA, DON'T LET THEM TOUCH ME!
DO NOT BE ALARMED. MY YOUNG BROTHER WILL NOT DARE HARM YOU!

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns &
P. Douglas
...ZETA SHOWS A PENDANT ON HER NECK...
YES BEAUTIFUL AJAK WRECK THAT HE IS!
THIS... THIS OLD MAN IS YOUR YOUNG BROTHER?
T.2d
BUT AS YOU CAN SEE AJAK WAS ONCE BEAUTIFUL TOO... 300 YEARS AGO!
WHAT ARE YOU AND THE OTHERS DOING HERE MY BROTHER? YOUR PLACE IS UP THERE ON LUNA!
THE WAY THEY'RE ALL CRINGING, COWERING FROM HER — NOT LIKE MEN — MORE LIKE FRIGHTENED DECAYING ANIMALS!

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns &
P. Douglas
ZETA PLEASE DON'T BANISH US AGAIN TO LUNA!
T.2e
THERE IS TROUBLE SISTER.
THE WORKERS ARE RESTLESS AFRAID...
OUR SIGHTINGS COULD MEAN AN INVASION FROM ANOTHER GALAXY!
YOU ARE IMAGINING THIS, YOU STUPID OLD MEN! AND YOU WILL BE PUNISHED FOR RETURNING HERE!
SHE TREATS THEM LIKE DIRT — AND ONE OF THESE POOR HIDEOUS CREATURES IS SUPPOSED TO BE HER OWN BROTHER!

THE SEEKERS
by J. M Burns &
P Douglas
THE UNMANNED ANCIENTS ARE FORCED BACK ABOARD THEIR TRANSPORTER
AND YOU WILL RETURN TO WORK ON REDUCED RATIONS FOR DARING TO INTRUDE HERE!
T2e5
BUT YOU MAY BE SENDING US BACK TO OUR DEATHS, ZETA!
STOP WHINING, BROTHER— AND GO!
THEIR DEPARTURE IS WATCHED BY JACOB...
HOW CAN ANYONE SO BEAUTIFUL BE SUCH A BITCH? AND WHAT KIND OF WORK IS SHE MAKING THEM DO UP ON THOSE SEVEN MOONS?
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
THE SPACE TRANSPORTER, CARRYING THE WEIRD ANCIENTS, ZOOMS OFF...
T2e6
WHAT ARE THOSE OLD WEIRDIES DOING UP ON THE SEVEN MOONS? IS ZETA RUNNING SOME KIND OF SLAVE RACKET?
IT'S TIME 'HER LOVELINESS' SATISFIED MY... CURIOSITY!
THE MAN IS COMING TO MY ROOM. PREPARE ME TO RECEIVE HIM
THE SEEKERS
by J M Burns &
P Douglas
COME IN, JACOB. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU
T2e7
AND I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT. A MAN'S THOUGHTS ARE NOT HARD TO READ
BUT AS JACOB REACHES SPELLBOUND FOR THE SENSUAL GODDESS...
YOU WISH TO PRY INTO MY AFFAIRS! YOU— A MERE WORTHLESS MALE — WHO HAS NO PLACE IN OUR WORLD!
A..A FINE TIME TO COOL ME OFF WITH A FREEZER RAY! HELL I CAN'T MOVE!
THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns &
P Douglas
JACOB HAS BEEN RENDERED IMMOBILE BY A FREEZER RAY...
SHE HATES MEN, SHE SAYS. SO WHAT'S THIS TANTALISING BIRD PLANNING TO DO WITH ME?
T2e8
HIS THOUGHTS ARE READ EASILY BY HIS FASCINATING CAPTOR...
IN THE MORNING YOU WILL BE DISPATCHED— ALONG WITH YOUR PARTNER, BREAKER OF THE TIME BARRIER!
BUT FIRST I SHALL SLEEP UNDISTURBED, AND YOU WILL WAIT TILL I AWAKE
BIG DEAL! I THOUGHT THIS SORT OF THING ONLY HAPPENED IN A BLOKE'S NIGHTMARES!

continued

THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK by H. P. Lovecraft.
PANTHER, 35p.

The world of H.P.Lovecraft is the world of the Cthulhu Mythos - the tract of stories begun by H.P.L. and carried on through the years by writers such as Bloch, Matheson, Derleth, Campbell and Wilson.The stories were based on the surmise that earth was, aeons ago, populated by a race of beings of such immense powers that we would term them Gods, but who left this planet for the furthest reaches of space, travelling beyond the farthest star to dwell in the space that lies between the space we know. Yet these beings were not content to remain there - and that they could return when one cursed with the right knowledge would open up the Gate and enable them to stride the earth once more.

The dread 'Necronomicon' of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred reads thus:

"The Old Ones were, The Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. Yog-Sothoth knows the Gate. Yog-Sothoth is the Gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and the guardian of the Gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where they shall break through again. He knows where They have trod earth's fields, and where They still tread them..."

This is the world of H.P.Lovecraft, a world of cosmic horror that has no equal. Lovecraft's stories are forcibly told with a compelling quality that makes the reader wonder at the state of his own sanity. For it is quite arguable that there is far more truth than fiction in these stories.

Lovecraft not only told his stories convincingly, but told them with a flair and style that sparked off dozens of authors to emulate. H.P.L. as a writer is unique. Certainly he has faults - the chief ones being a tendency towards the over-descriptive, and a penchant for revealing the ending well in advance. But for this, he reigns supreme as a writer, and will long be remembered for instituting one of the most compelling cycle of horror tales ever put on paper. Today, some thirty six years after his death, his works are still receiving accolades as a new generation of readers discover his stories, and the large number of copies of his works sold each year testify to the standing in which this author's memory is held.

I must confess a strong feeling towards his stories, and I regard him as one of my favourite writers, and certainly the best author of horror stories that I have yet read. I first discovered him many years ago by reading the title story of this collection in a different anthology. The story impressed me so much that I searched out more of his works. "The Haunter of the Dark" is still, in my opinion, one of the best that he wrote; and the quality of H.P.L.'s work makes reviewing this book a pleasure rather than a task.

The collection, edited by the late August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, opens with a brief foreward by Derleth in connection with H.P.L.'s writings. Lovecraft himself is as intriguing as many of his stories, although his life is too well documented to warrant going into it here. Suffice it to say that this series of remarkable stories came from an equally remarkable man. There are ten stories in this collection, and of the six paperback collections of Lovecraft's tales this is easily the strongest. It opens with "The Outsider", which Lovecraft devotees have hailed as being a superb piece in the vein of Edgar Allen Poe. When I first read the story, I couldn't quite see this, though this re-reading has brought the point home. There are many influences in Lovecraft's writings, the predominant ones being Lord Dunsany and Arthur Machen, but this is one of the few outright 'swipes' in his works. The story is certainly effective, and has a fine sting in its tail - one that Lovecraft doesn't give away as he is so often known to. The second story is "The Rats in the Walls", a rather inferior piece, and one of his less successful stories. The third story is again a lesser piece, "Pickman's Model", although this one builds up very well, and maintains a suspenseful atmosphere throughout.

The fourth tale is possibly the penultimate of all the Cthulhu Mythos stories. "The Call of Cthulhu" was the first story that Lovecraft wrote that revealed his overall framework. It was first published in 1926, and still remains one of the best in the series. It is one of the few that H.P.L. wrote that does not centre around a house or a city that he devised for the Mythos such as Arkham, Dunwich or Miskatonic. For the first time the readers were shown a portent of things that were to come, and some prose was introduced that would intrigue readers for years to come. "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn"- "In his hose at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

Several other stories in the book are from the Cthulhu Mythos proper - "The Dunwich Horror", "The Whisperer in Darkness", The Colour out of Space" and "The Haunter of the Dark", the title story of the collection. Theses stories contributed to the forming of the Mythos, their publishing dates being 1928, 1930, 1927 and 1935 respectively. Each story has its own unique qualities and a powerful and compelling force. Each tale, considered individually, would be well worth the purchase price of this book. They each contain factors that emerge into the finest examples of cosmic horror ever written, and are certainly not to be missed by any reader interested in the field of macabre literature.

The final story in the book is no less compelling. "The Music of Erich Zann" build builds up flawlessly and retains a strange haunting quality. Because of this, it is on one of the more memorable of Lovecraft's stories. The circumstances that befall the lodger in the Rue d'Auseil are not easily forgotten.

To try and single out any story as being the best in the collection would, as far as I am concerned, be a sheer waste of time. Each story is a masterpiece of the macabre.

The cover blurb of this book reads, in typically corny style, "...you would be advised not to read this late at night if you hope for untroubled sleep..." I thought that no writer would be able to unnerve me - not with the written word. Lovecraft proved how wrong I was. He is, indeed, a writer.

Lee Hopewell

MINDSWAP by Robert Sheckley
PAN BOOKS, 156pp. 30p

Robert Sheckley is a fine writer whose style encompasses both that of a science fiction author and highly competant satarist. Combined with his deep and penetrating looks at the society in which we live, each story and novel by this man is indeed a work to be examined for the hall marks of quality. "Mindswap" is no exception.

Sheckley's other books include the socially biting "Tenth Victim" and "The Status Civilisation", both of which rate highly on my personal list of favourite novels; but his work also includes such first-rate short story collections as "Shards of Space", "The People Trap" and "Citizen in Space".

"Mindswap" is both funny and in its own way, as biting as his other novels with its almost surrealistic look at civilisation. The novel begins with the following advertisement in the "Stanhope Gazette":

'Gentleman from Mars, age forty three, quiet, studious, cultured, wishes to exchange bodies with similarly inclined Earth gentleman. August 1st - September 1st. References exchanged. Brokers protected.'

The advert is answered by Marvin Flynn, who exchanges bodies with the Martian, Ze Kraggash, of the advertisement. But when Flynn is on Mars in the alien body, he is arrested by the police - who have another mind laying claim to the same body! It appears that Ze Kraggash is a crook who has stolen money by this fraudulent exchange of minds. Aigeler Thrus, a telepath of the Nemucthian Adventists of Achelses V, lays claim to the Martian body inhabited by Flynn's mind - and Flynn is given 'notice to quit', so to speak. And from this point on the novel really develops. Flynn is forced to undergo considerable quests in an effort to find a body, and the final 'battle' between Flynn and Ze Kraggash is the funniest sequence in the entire book.

"Mindswap" is not intended to be taken as a serious novel, and you will be deluding yourself if you try to. It's intended to be fun, and author Sheckley achieves this with very little difficulty whatsoever. The comedy ranges from satire to slapstick to biting commentaries on life itself, all perpetuated upon a solid baseground of a novel. With the possible exeption of Mack Reynold there is no author more adept at writing this type of story. Indeed, each individual sentence abounds with a life and uniqueness of its own. No other writer could produce such gems as the following:-

'It is a truism throughout the civilised galaxy that when you go to the police, your troubles really begin.'

As they say in show business: follow that!

Reviewer: Lee Hopewell

CONAN - "THE BLACK SPHINX OF NEBTHU" by L. Sprague de Camp & Lin Carter (Fantastic Science Fiction and Fantasy Stories, July 1973)

The cover of the July 1973 "Fantastic Stories" proudly bears the legend 'Conan is Back!' in thick black lettering larger than the actual title logo itself. Such then is the mighty drawing power of the character created by the late Robert E. Howard.

"The Black Sphinx of Nebthu" is classed as a short novel on the contents page, yet rus for only approximately seventeen thousand words - less than a third of the length of what could even be remotely called a novel of average length. It is well displayed, and the editor of "Fantastic", Ted White, draws reference to the previous new Conan story published in the pages of the same magazine, "The Witch of the Mists" from the August 1972 issue which, it would appear was an almighty success. Both these stories have one major facet in common.

They stink.

DeCamp and Carter cannot capture anything that even remotely resembles Howard's original style, a fact that they proved tremendously well with that travesty of writing that passed as a novel, "Conan the Buccaneer". Now they are working together on the twelth and final book in the chronicles of Conan, and this one is to be a collection of four novelettes : these selfsame stories that are now appearing in "Fantastic". It is a great pity that the character of Conan was left to be judged on what Howard alone wrote and not upon that which deCamp and Carter are managing to do to him.

The plot is simplicity itself - the Cimmerian, now a ruler remember, journyes into Stygia in search of a final confrontation with Thoth-Amon, but instead finds ...the Black Sphinx of Nebthu. Typically overworked, the two authors do very little to try and liven it up at all. Indeed even the fight scenes that this story does contain are very thin and unsatisfying. The confrontation between Conan and Thoth-Amon is anti-climatic, predictable and downright dull; Thoth-Amon, of course, manages to escape to confront the mighty Cimmerian another day in true comic book style.

The writing this time seems to be predominately Carter's, and borders on being both flowery and absurd. The silent brooding barbarian that Howard created has vanished completely in favour of a black-maned stranger that talks more like Thor than anyone else. Conan would not say, "Mayhap. But I fear your slinking serpents little, and my tall knights would draw their crooked fangs with ease. Warriors, I doubt me not, are reaping a red harvest this hour." This is bad even for a Marvel comic book! And the lines of Thoth-Amon are even worse, the only one that I noticed as being missing was, "Curses! Foiled again!"

This is topped off by two awful illustrations, including a cover by Harry Roland and a full page b&w illo by Billy Graham that had me in stitches when I first saw it - in fact, it still does! Conan's physical build is absolutely ridiculous; out of proportion just does not enter into it at all. And the expression on his face.... (And those eyes! -R.)

This, then, is Conan ruined. Not recommended to anyone interested in the character at all.

Reviewer: Lee Hopewell

THE SMALL ASSASSIN by Ray Bradbury
NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY, 144pp., 30p.

"The Small Assassin" loses out in many ways, unfortunately. Firstly there is the rather drab and unattractive cover, which pales even further in comparison to the superb Bruce Pennington painting for NEL's companion volume of Bradbury stories, "The October Country". Secondly, and by far the most important, are the stories themselves in this collection. Of the ten Bradbury anthologies of short stories and novelettes currently available in the bookstores, the selection contained in "The Small Assassin" is by far the most inferior.

The sole saving facet of this collection is the reprinting of the first story by Bradbury that I ever encountered, and which remains one of my favourite stories to this day - "The Lake". Very few stories have ever achieved the terrific sense of atmosphere as are plumbed by the author in this tale, and indeed the only story that the author has written that has surpassed the tense mood of this short story is his novel "Something Wicked This Way Comes". These two entries for me, more than any other, display the haunting atmosphere to be found in Bradbury's stories of a world of perpetual autumn. His style is very often only suited to those who develop a strong rapport with the author's abilities, and if I'm to be labelled as such, then I be labelled willingly: Bradbury is one of my three favourite writers, and is one of a handful that can instill within this somewhat jaded reviewer a true sense of atmosphere so long lost from the printed word.

However, as well as "The Lake" there are twelve other stories in the collection, but none of them really seem to have the same Bradbury magic that is realised in "The Lake" and so many other stories. Quite possibly, this may be due to the fact that they are, generally, straight forward fantasies and horror stories, and the terrific Bradbury imagination is not really allowed to run riot as on other occassions. The one exception in this case is "The Night", a story reckoned by many Bradbury fans to be his best. While being a first rate tale, it is in mood inferior to "The Lake", and has been fairly well anthologised in the past. This tale is of course a chapter culled from his novel "Dandelion Wine".

The other stories in the book do however admirably display Bradbury's major writing attributes and do nonetheless provide ample reasons why this author has gained the reputation he has. "The Tombstone" and "The Handler" are two good examples that show off well Bradbury's dry humour: "The Next In Line" is a perfect showing of Bradbury's knowledge of the peoples and customs of Mexico: and stories such as "Jack In the Box" and "The Man Upstairs" are fine examples of those brilliant and haunting tales that Bradbury writes from a child's viewpoint. "The Small Assassin" is not a first rate collection, yet it has much about it that is good. There aren't too many like it.

Reviewer: Lee Hopewell

JIZZLE by John Wyndham
NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY, 191pp., 30p.

I've been hoping that NEL would reprint this book for some time now. It's one that I had heard a considerable lot about, and have wanted to read for quite a while to see if it is as good as it is supposed to be. I must confess to a certain resurge in interest in the works of JohnWyndhamof late, as will many sf readers. This is of course due to the recent publication of four new books for the first time by Coronet, surmounted by superb covers by Chris Foss. These reawakened my interest in Wyndham'swritings which originally formed part of my basic introduction to the science fiction field many years ago, and several of which were used as readers in the schools that I attended. Like so many other writers he was one that had automatically been assigned to my younger days and had long been overlooked with the sad noting of his passing in 1969.

"Jizzle" has a superb cover, which seems to be by Bruce Pennington although no artist is actually credited. (A point, incidentally, that I would like to see rectified on paperbacks where ever this is possible.) There are 15 stories in this collection, all of which will be new to the majority of sf readers which range from such diverse sources as "Everybody's", "Argosy" and "The Woman's Home Journal". I hadn't quite realised how widespread the interest in science fiction had become by the time of this collection's original publication in 1954. Each individual story in this collection contains various factors that single it out for praise, and it is doubtful that any publishers will be able to make a better collection of his tales. In fact I think that I would be hard pressed to single out a story that I could regard as being superior, and it isn't many collections that I find myself in the position where I can truthfully say that.

Each different story ranges to its own individual mood, and the first story of the book, the title story of "Jizzle" sets the atmosphere well. Although no individual credits are given as to the original place of publication of the tales save for five, "Jizzle" first appeared in "Colliers" for January 8th, 1949 under the byline of John Beynon. (Wyndham'sfull name was John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris, and during his early magazine days, he wrote under various combinations of these names. Wyndham'snovel "The Outward Urge" appears under the collaborative byline of John Wyndham and Lucas Parkes - but the book was only authored by the one man!) "Jizzle", concerning a weird little female monkey with a strange artistic talent, is a perfect start to this collection.

Strangely enough, this collection only came about as a stop gap between novels. Wyndham's novels sold exceptionally well in hardcover, and these prompted the publishers to gather short stories for the years when Wyndham would not produce a full length novel. (The collection "The Seeds of Time" also had this unusual genesis.) Therefore this strange and compelling little collection may only have really transpired by accident - and surely one of the most beneficial accidents ever known.

Bringing Up Father

A GENTLEMAN TO SEE YOU IN REGARD TO WHERE TO SPEND A VACATION-
JUST TELL HIM THERE'S NO ONE HOME-
I'M GLAD MAGGIE'S OUT OR SHE'D MAKE ME LISTEN TO HIM-
HE'S GONE SIR- I TOLD HIM THERE WAS NOBODY HOME-
WHAT DID HE SAY?
HE SAID HE KNEW THAT WHEN HE SAW YOU THROUGH THE WINDOW FROM THE STREET-
WELL- THE FAMILY SEEM'S TO AGREE THAT THE SEA-SHORE IS THE PLACE TO SPEND THE SUMMER- BUT I THINK THEY'RE ALL WRONG-
MAGGIE' AFTER THINKIN' IT OVER- I GUESS THE SEA SHORE IS AS GOOD A PLACE TO GO AS ANY-
WELL I'M GLAD THE FAMILY HAS DECIDED AT LAST TO GO TO THE SEA SHORE- I THINK I'LL TRY ON ME NEW BATHIN' SUIT-
GREAT SCOTT!
FATHER!
SURE- WHO DID YOU THINK IT WUZ- CLARK GABLE?
HELLO' IS THIS MRS- MUGH MIDITY? STOP WORK ON MY BEACH SUITS- I'VE DECIDED NOT TO GO TO THE SEA SHORE-
SEE- THE MOSQUITOES ARE CHEWIN ME UP I'LL BE GLAD WHEN WE GO ON OUR VACATION TO THE MOUNTAINS
HERE COMES WILLIE NOCK- I AIN'T SEEN HIM FER A MONTH-
YOU SAY YOUVE BEEN VACATIONIN IN THE MOUNTAINS?
YEP' BUT I CUT SHORT MY STAY-
I COULDNT STAND THE MOSQUITOES-
I'M GITTIN SICK AN TIRED OF ME FAMILY QUARRELIN ABOUT WHERE TO GO THIS SUMMER- I'M GOIN RIGHT DOWN AN' GIT TICKETS AN MAKE RESERVATIONS AT SOME MOUNTAIN RESORT-
YES DEAR' YOU SAY YOU ARE MISERABLE WELL WHY DONT YOU MOVE TO SOME OTHER HOTEL? YOU SAY THE MOSQUITOES ARE AWFUL? WHY THEY TOLD ME IT WAS COOL UP THERE REALLY? YOU SAY THE FOOD IS IMPOSSIBLE'
WELL, DEAR' YOU HAD BETTER COME HOME- I GUESS THE MOUNTAINS ARE NO PLACE TO SPEND ONES VACATION-
I GUESS IT'S BETTER TO STAY HOME AN LET THE FAMILY QUARREL ALL SUMMER-

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